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THE PATHS THAT LED TO WAR



# THE PATHS THAT LED TO WAR

EUROPE 1919-1939

BY  
JOHN MACKINTOSH



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## PREFACE

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WHILE history is a continuous narrative, there are certain periods which have so clearly a definite beginning and end that they may be justly treated as detached but quite complete episodes in mankind's story. Such a one is that covered by this book—the Versailles period from 1919 to 1939. It began after the conclusion of the Great War of 1914–1918 with a peace settlement that not only altered the map of Europe but also changed the mental and spiritual outlook of millions of people. They stepped forward into the future in 1919, confident that an era of peace and co-operation between the nations was beginning. But the paths they trod turned in a circle and led them back in 1939 to the spot where the peoples of Europe had stood twenty-five years before.

The principal conflict in the years 1919–1939 was that between men who longed for peace and those who willed war. In retrospect it is easy to see the main factors in the struggle: France's desire for security; the failure of the League of Nations; the poisoning of the clear spirit of nationalism until it became a hateful weapon of cruelty and oppression; the rise of the dictators and the seizure by ambitious men of the power of life and death over their fellows; and the earnest striving in the democratic countries for peace, in order that men might solve the urgent social problems that faced them.

This book deals not only with international relationships but also with the internal affairs of European countries, for there is a close connection between the two. The domestic history of a nation frequently exercises a decisive influence on its attitude towards its neighbours. Moreover, it is needful to know the political and social changes that occur in individual states in order to gauge the strength that stands behind an aggressor, and to appreciate the confidence with which a free people answers a challenge to its security.

The Versailles period ends with the figure of Hitler in the foreground. He stands in 1939 surrounded by his satellites, pouring scorn on the Christian virtues of truth, faith, and charity, invoking the powers of destruction to crush the defenceless, and hurling defiance at those who would deny Germany's claim to impose her will on the rest of Europe.

During the years 1919-1939 the men who strove in their varying ways to prevent an outbreak of war in Europe crowd the canvas—Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Poincaré, Briand, Austen Chamberlain, Stresemann, Ramsay MacDonald, Litvinov, Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain. But there is one who is frequently forgotten. Looking back over the years since Versailles, the historian may feel that one name stands out in the struggle to protect the west from attack, that of the ex-serviceman and Minister of War who built a wall of steel and concrete to save France and the civilization of Europe from the aggressor—André Maginot.

JOHN MACKINTOSH.

ABERDEEN,  
*December, 1939.*

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# PRELUDE

1918

ON 11th November, 1918, the Great War came to an end, when Germany, the most powerful of the enemies of the Allied and Associated Powers,<sup>1</sup> surrendered. In the Forest of Compiègne at five o'clock in the morning the terms of an armistice were agreed to, and six hours later an unnatural stillness fell on the devastated belt of territory stretching from the North Sea to the borders of Switzerland, where for four years two mighty forces had struggled grimly and wearily for an end that seemed almost unattainable. But the Allied blockade and the entry of the U.S.A. into the war had their effect, and peace came with what seemed to most people miraculous suddenness.

It was time that hostilities ceased, for Europe was in a state of rapid dissolution, with disease and famine stalking in the lands of the defeated. Even in the victor countries death reaped his harvest in the autumn of 1918; a terrible influenza scourge, which reached its peak then, carried off hundreds of thousands.<sup>2</sup> In Russia the starving population was struggling in the merciless turmoil of a civil war. The Ottoman Empire had collapsed, and the Allies stood ready, knife in hand, to dismember this sick man of Europe, who was yet to be an unconscionable time a-dying. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was disintegrating before the astonished eyes of soldier and statesman into its component parts, the eager Poles, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and others not waiting for a formal peace treaty to assert their freedom, but already seizing the "national" territories which they claimed as their own. Finally, Germany had reached the limit of her endurance. Ludendorff, First Quartermaster-General of the German Army, had told the Reichstag to make what terms

<sup>1</sup> The chief Powers were: British Empire, France, Belgium, Serbia, U.S.A., Italy, Rumania, Greece, Japan. Germany's allies were Austria-Hungary, Turkey, Bulgaria.

<sup>2</sup> It was estimated that in England and Wales influenza claimed 112,329 victims in 1918.

it could, the navy had mutinied, revolution had broken out among the civilian population, and with the flight of William II to Holland the collapse of the Imperial Reich was complete.

The Allies had won the victory, and to the strident screech of sirens crowds flocked into the streets of London, Paris, and New York, shrieking and huzzaing at the advent of peace. In the House of Commons Lloyd George, the Premier, announced the signing of the armistice and read the terms. Then he led his fellow-members to the neighbouring Church of St. Margaret, "to give thanks to a God who had been adjured with equal fervour by all parties to the dispute, and had at long last decided, presumably, in favour of the right combination".<sup>1</sup> Few people realized that while the cease-fire was definitely an end it was equally definitely but a beginning; and that the making of peace might prove a more difficult task than the waging of war. People's thoughts were of the past, not of the future—the eight million men who had lost their lives during the struggle, the millions who were maimed in body and mind, the countless villages which lay in ruins, the thousands of tons of shipping that rusted at the bottom of the sea.

The greatest emotional satisfaction is enjoyed when a surrender is complete and unconditional, and no one wished to be reminded that actually the Germans had laid down their arms on terms—terms which were both definite and vague—namely, the historic Fourteen Points of the American President, Woodrow Wilson. In a speech to Congress on 8th January, 1918, Wilson had expounded these Fourteen Points upon which a just and lasting peace might be built. These in outline were:

- (1) Open covenants of peace between nations and no secret diplomacy.
- (2) Absolute freedom of navigation, alike in peace and war, outside territorial waters.
- (3) The removal, as far as possible, of all economic barriers.
- (4) Adequate guarantees to reduce national armaments to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.
- (5) The impartial adjustment of all colonial claims on the principle that the interests of the populations concerned have equal weight with the claims of a Government whose title is to be determined.

<sup>1</sup> *The Harvest of Victory*: Wingfield-Stratford.

- (6) The evacuation of all Russian territory, and Russia to be given unhampered opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy, and to be welcomed into the League of Nations.
- (7) The evacuation and "restoration" of Belgium.
- (8) The evacuation and "restoration" of French territory, and the return to France of Alsace-Lorraine.
- (9) The readjustment of the frontiers of Italy along recognizable lines of nationality.
- (10) The freest opportunity of autonomous development to be accorded to the peoples of Austria-Hungary.
- (11) Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro to be evacuated and occupied territories to be "restored". Serbia to be given free access to the sea. The Balkans to be settled along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality.
- (12) Turkish portions of the Ottoman Empire to be assured a secure sovereignty. Subject nationalities to be assured security and the opportunity of autonomous development. The Dardanelles to be permanently open to shipping, under international guarantees.
- (13) The establishment of an independent Polish state with free and secure access to the sea.
- (14) The formation of a general association of nations for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

In addresses which he delivered during 1918 Wilson elaborated these points and supplemented them by various "principles". He emphasized as essential for a just peace that there should be no annexations and no punitive damages; that self-determination was not a mere phrase; and that in the treatment of both enemy and friend impartial justice must be the guiding rule.

It was on the basis of these Fourteen Points that Prince Max of Baden, Chancellor of Germany, approached Wilson on 4th October, 1918, begging him in an official note to negotiate peace. Communications passed between the German Government and Wilson, and Wilson and the Allied commanders. The President demanded the deposition of the autocratic rulers of Germany, on whom he laid



the chief responsibility for the war, and the Germans agreed. The Allies were prepared to accept the Wilsonian Points with two reservations. The principle of the freedom of the seas, embodied in Point 2, was one to which Britain refused to agree. Wilson was insistent on upholding this principle, and it looked at one time as though a rupture between the British Government and the U.S.A. President was inevitable. But Colonel House, a skilled diplomat who represented the United States on the Allied Council, paved a way out of the difficulty. He drew up an elaborate commentary on the Fourteen Points, which was, in Winston Churchill's phrase, "an accommodating document". He evaded the problem of the freedom of the seas by insisting that Point 2 "did not mean the abolition of the principle of blockade", but that it signified "that codification of maritime usage that would sanctify the doctrine of the immunity of private property at sea in time of war". This declaration, apparently, was acceptable to both Wilson and the British Government.

On the question of reparation from Germany the Allies also made their position clear. The vagueness of the word "restoring", applied in Wilson's Points to the invaded regions, did not suit them. They made it plain that they understood by this that compensation could be claimed by them "for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and to their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea, and from the air". Wilson accepted this interpretation.

On 9th November Prince Max of Baden resigned, and a provisional Socialist Government, under an ex-saddler Ebert, was established. The abdication of the Kaiser on the same day was followed by that of other German sovereigns. Ebert's Government accepted the armistice terms of the Allies in the belief that the final peace would be based on the Fourteen Points. The terms of the armistice were severe and provided against any possibility of Germany's renewing the war. The German submarines had to be surrendered immediately; the greater part of her surface fleet was handed over to the Allies to be interned;<sup>1</sup> and Allied troops were allowed to occupy the enemy territory west of the Rhine. Moreover, the blockade of Germany was continued.

Now that there was peace Lloyd George, who had been Prime Minister since December, 1916, determined to appeal to the country in a general election. There were obvious disadvantages in holding

<sup>1</sup> "When you see thirty years of an arduous and dangerous conspiracy stealing into a British harbour to lower its flag to the British Fleet, it is something to be proud of," said Lloyd George. Seven months later the crews scuttled their ships and most of the prize disappeared in the waters of Scapa Flow.

an election at this time; the country was in an unsettled state, the troops were not demobilized, and a war atmosphere, scarcely conducive to unbiased thinking, still prevailed. On the other hand, the Government could with justice claim that good reasons must give place to better. A Franchise Act of 1918 had enlarged the electorate, giving moreover the vote to women for the first time; Parliament had already prolonged its life by three years; and it was essential that Britain's representatives at the Peace Conference should go with the authority of the country behind them. The dissentient voices were stilled, and the election held. It was a "coupon" election, the Premier giving a "coupon" to those candidates who were pledged to support him wholeheartedly, and recommending the electors to vote for them.

In *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, John M. Keynes traced the gradual deterioration which took place in Lloyd George's attitude towards Germany in the weeks preceding the election. The people as a whole were determined to exact their pound of flesh from Germany, and those candidates who seemed touched with human gentleness and ready to glance an eye of pity on the enemy were soon brought to their senses. The Premier would have preferred no doubt to remain non-committal, and to formulate the actual terms of peace after calm deliberation and not in the heat of an election campaign. But he was forced by pressure from his followers and from newspapers (particularly those belonging to Lord Northcliffe) to join in the popular cries of the market-place. The electorate conveniently forgot that the enemy had surrendered not unconditionally but—or so it seemed to the Germans—on quite precise terms.

The election manifesto which Lloyd George and Bonar Law issued on 22nd November, 1918, contained no allusion to hanging the Kaiser or to demanding a large indemnity from the enemy. Instead, the value of disarmament and of the League of Nations was emphasized, as also was the task of the Government "to conclude a just and lasting peace, and so to establish the foundations of a new Europe that occasion for further war may be for ever averted". But the mildness of this appeal did not satisfy war-racked nerves, and Lloyd George, who was acutely sensitive to the atmosphere of a situation, realized that more was expected of him. Towards the end of November he committed himself to the principle that "Germany must pay the costs of the war up to the limit of her capacity to do so", at the same time issuing a warning that extravagant hopes of reparation were not likely to be realized. While Lloyd

George kept a tight rein on his utterances, others of his supporters were not so discreet. Barnes, a Labour member of the War Cabinet, shouted from the platform that he was "for hanging the Kaiser". Lloyd George denied that he himself ever used this phrase; he said merely that "the Kaiser must be prosecuted".<sup>1</sup> Another of the Premier's ministers gave figurative emphasis to the claim which the Allies intended to make on the enemy. "We shall get out of her all you can squeeze out of a lemon and a bit more," he said. "I will squeeze her until you can hear the pips squeak." Not content, he added that he would strip Germany as she had stripped Belgium.

A few days before the poll Lloyd George issued a final manifesto in which he emphasized, with other points, the trial of the Kaiser, the punishment of those responsible for atrocities, and the fullest indemnity from Germany. Speaking at Bristol he said: "First, as far as justice is concerned, we have an absolute right to demand the whole cost of the war from Germany. The second point is that we propose to demand the whole cost of the war."

The election (on 14th December) was an overwhelming triumph for the coupon candidates, and gave the Premier a working majority of 420 in the House. Critics did not conceal their contempt for the type of member elected; "the most unintelligent body of public-school boys which even the Mother of Parliaments has known," wrote H. Nicolson in *Peacemaking, 1919*. Of the 105 or so independent Liberals from whom Lloyd George had withheld his coupon (on the ground that during the war they had not given him unswerving support) only 28 were returned. Among those who lost their seats was Asquith, the leader of the party. Labour was represented in the new Parliament by 63 members. Lloyd George's victory was so complete indeed as to contain within itself the germ of a final defeat. Had the opposition in the House been stronger he would have had a better chance of retaining his grip over the Government's supporters, and might with opposition help have modified the pledges he had made during the election campaign. Moreover, from another point of view, a suspicion of defeat may have crossed his mind when he realized the composition of the Commons. Through the skilful management of Sir George Younger, the Chairman of the Unionist Party Organization, the Conservatives had gained far more seats than had the Liberal supporters of the Premier, although party labels in the election had not been reputed to count.

While Lloyd George went to Paris to attend the Peace Con-

<sup>1</sup> *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. I: Lloyd George.

ference with a clear mandate from the electorate and a House which at the moment thoroughly supported him, President Wilson was not so fortunate—and this partly through his own fault. The American Congressional Election took place in November, 1918, and Wilson, instead of carrying out a peace campaign on non-party lines, issued an appeal to the electors to vote only for his own party, the Democrats. Despite this appeal, which widened the breach already existing between Wilson and the Republican leaders, the Democrats suffered a signal defeat. The balance of power in the Senate, and in the Foreign Relations Committee, was now in favour of Wilson's opponents. There was still a chance for the President to conciliate the Republicans by inviting some of their most able leaders to join the American delegation for the Peace Conference. This he did not do.<sup>1</sup> When he left America in the *George Washington* on 4th December he was no longer the accredited spokesman of the American people; he could conclude a treaty, but the Senate had the power to refuse ratification.

In the middle of December Wilson arrived in Europe and enjoyed a triumph such as has fallen to few politicians. In England, France, and Italy he was welcomed as a saviour of mankind. "I believe," he said in a speech at Manchester, "that . . . men are beginning to see, not perhaps the golden age, but an age which at any rate is brightening from decade to decade, and will lead us some time to an elevation from which we can see the things for which the heart of mankind is longing".<sup>2</sup> To the Germans as to the Allied peoples he was a prophet sent to free men from the torture of hatred and war. The enthusiasm with which he was greeted convinced Wilson himself that "if, when the Conference met, he could only speak so that they might hear, no diplomatist of the old order could withstand him. Destiny was taking him, and the whole world with him, toward a future bright with promise."<sup>3</sup> In London he was cordially received in official circles, but he remained, as always, aloof, and showed no feelings of friendship for or sympathy with those whom he met. He made no reference in his public utterances to the part played by the British Fleet during the war, despite the fact that British ships had carried half the American forces over to France. Actually the only allusion he ever made to Britain's share in this work was when he boasted of the number of

<sup>1</sup> Three Republicans did accompany Wilson to Paris, but they were lesser men and not members of Congress.

<sup>2</sup> *The Annual Register*, 1918, p. [169].

<sup>3</sup> *Only Yesterday*: Allen.

American soldiers who had been transported across the Atlantic, and said that "no lives were lost in the crossing except on one ship, and that was a British one".<sup>1</sup>

And so 1918 came to a close, and in all quarters of the world cool-headed and passionate diplomats mounted train and boarded steamship, their luggage brimful of Blue Books and Departmental Reports, their brains tormented with ambitions and hopes and fears. From all quarters of the world they converged on one city, Paris, for in Paris in 1919 the Victor Powers were to decide in what direction the destiny of Europe—perhaps of the world—was to be guided.

<sup>1</sup> *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. I: Lloyd George.

# PART ONE

1919–1931



## CHAPTER I

### PEACE CONFERENCE

ON 18th January, 1919, the Peace Conference opened in Paris, a city tense with excitement and packed to overflowing with a host of delegates (and their numerous staffs), some five hundred journalists, and thousands of sightseers. It was a conference on an unprecedented scale, nearly four-fifths of the population of the world being represented.<sup>1</sup> One notable absentee was Russia, hostile at this moment to her former allies. The leading members of the British delegation (the whole delegation numbered over 200) were well primed for the tasks which lay before them. A series of Peace Conference Handbooks had been prepared for their use. One of these, the work of Professor C. K. Webster,<sup>2</sup> dealt with the Congress of Vienna (1814-15), and the procedure, &c., which had been followed there. This was the only congress that in magnitude could be compared in any way with the conference in Paris.

At the opening meeting of the delegates, which was held at the French Foreign Office in the Quai d'Orsay, it was decided that the main work of the conference would be in the hands of a Council of Ten, representing Britain, France, U.S.A., Italy, and Japan. It was realized that it would be impossible to draw up peace terms expeditiously if matters had to be discussed by all the delegates. Speed, moreover, was essential. Large parts of Europe were disintegrating, and despair and anarchy threatened to destroy what remained of civilization in the south-east. The expense of keeping huge armies in the field was a serious item, and demobilization could not be completely carried out until a peace settlement had been made. Only then, also, would statesmen be able to turn to the task of restoring the economic and political stability of the continent.

The Plenary Conference of all the Allies met only six times, and it was convened mainly to approve of decisions already made by the

<sup>1</sup> Thirty-two Victor Powers were represented, and twenty-three other peoples whose interests were linked in some way with the decisions to be made in Paris.

<sup>2</sup> Webster acted as secretary to the military section of the British delegation.



Great Powers. The smaller powers were discontented at their exclusion from the decisive discussions; they were represented, however, on the numerous commissions (no fewer than 56) which sifted masses of material and tried to reconcile conflicting territorial and other claims. Even the Council of Ten proved unduly large. Its work was delayed by the absence from Paris for a month of both Lloyd George and Wilson. While they were absent an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Clemenceau, the French Premier, was made; he was shot through the lung—it was a dangerous wound—but he made a wonderful recovery. In the middle of March the Council of Ten became one of Four—namely, Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Orlando—and for a time one of three, for Orlando left Paris for three weeks as a protest against Wilson's objections to what the Italian considered the legitimate demands of his country.

Of the three men in whose hands lay the task of making peace, probably Wilson was the one who attracted most attention throughout the countries of Europe. He had arrived from America with a nostrum, contained in his Fourteen Points, that was to bring peace and goodwill to mankind. He was a mixture, according to Lloyd George,<sup>1</sup> of idealism and integrity on the one hand, and personal hatreds, suspiciousness, and intolerance of criticism on the other. Two ideas dominated him, self-determination and the League of Nations. But apart from his Fourteen Points, which were sufficiently vague to lend themselves to some variety of interpretation (as Colonel House had proved), he had no plans of any kind, no definite proposals for peace. His ideas were nebulous, his knowledge of racial mixtures in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe vague and inaccurate.<sup>2</sup> He had, as he himself said, "a single-track mind with no sidings".<sup>3</sup> It was only after interminable discussion that his colleagues could convince him that some concession which they wished did not materially injure the principles for which he stood.

In contrast to Wilson, Georges Clemenceau, "The Tiger", was no idealist. A veteran of almost 77 years, he knew exactly what France needed, namely security. His political philosophy, in so far as it concerned peacemaking, was summed up in his own words:

<sup>1</sup> *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. I.

<sup>2</sup> "Wilson thought that Prague was in Poland, Sarajevo in Serbia, and the inhabitants of the South Tyrol were Italian in race." (*The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.) But geographical difficulties must have faced all the delegates. "How many members ever heard of Teschen?" said Lloyd George in the Commons in April, 1919. "I do not mind saying that I had never heard of it."

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Lord Riddell.

"You must never negotiate with a German or conciliate him; you must dictate to him".<sup>1</sup> Having definite ideas of what he wanted, and the will to force these ideas on his colleagues, it was Clemenceau who set the tone of the conference. Frequently he made extreme proposals in order to gain some reputation for moderation by yielding to the appeals of Wilson and Lloyd George to modify his terms. On points which he considered vital he was usually adamant.

The last of the trio, Lloyd George, Britain's chief representative, occupied an intermediate position. He, like Wilson, had a vision of a world ("fit for heroes to live in") in which the threat of war would disappear if a just peace could be assured. On the other hand, he was a politician, with a quick and acute mind, who was pledged to make certain extreme demands on the enemy in order to retain the confidence of his followers in Parliament. These demands he might not have made had he been free to act as an independent statesman. It was owing to Lloyd George that parts of the treaties were left somewhat vague (the amount of reparation to be demanded, for example) in order that a settlement of these difficulties might be made when tempers were cooler and war fever had died down.<sup>2</sup>

When the actual discussion of terms was in progress, Wilson was no match for his colleagues. While he excelled in the delivery of "sermonettes"—homilies in which he seemed to regard himself "as a missionary whose function it was to rescue the poor European heathen from their agelong worship of false and fiery gods",<sup>3</sup> he proved of little use in the give-and-take of verbal discussion. "He, the professor turned politician, was soon hopelessly out of his depth amid these cross-currents of intrigue. He was at once a greater and a lesser man than the nimble-witted worldlings with whom he had to cope."<sup>4</sup> He had considerable power of self-deception, and when he finally yielded to some demand that in the opinion of outsiders was directly opposed to the principles for which he stood, Wilson could convince himself that the concession he had made was in harmony with the spirit of the Fourteen Points. In any case he was prepared to allow some injustices to be embodied in the treaties if the Powers accepted the League of Nations, for the League could in time remedy what proved unjust or impracticable. At a Plenary Conference Wilson persuaded the delegates to make the League an

<sup>1</sup> *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*: Keynes.

<sup>2</sup> *Political Consequences of the Great War*: Muir.

<sup>3</sup> *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. I: Lloyd George.

<sup>4</sup> *The Harvest of Victory*: Wingfield-Stratford.

integral part of the peace treaties, and a commission was appointed to draw up a constitution for it. Wilson himself served on this commission, and through his influence the Covenant of the League was prepared actually before the peace terms were considered.

While the idea of a League of Nations was associated in the public mind with the utterances of Wilson, the Covenant was not the work of the American President or of his delegation. In January, 1917, a British committee, with Lord Phillimore as chairman, had been set up to work out the practical details of such a league. In France, also, where in June, 1917, the Chamber approved of a proposal for an association of both great and small states, a committee examined the problem, and under the direction of Léon Bourgeois drafted a scheme. General Smuts also prepared a valuable memorandum (Lloyd George called it the "ablest state paper" he had seen during the war) outlining his views on the League. The actual Covenant which was accepted by the Peace Conference on 14th February, 1919, was based on this preparatory work. It was Colonel House who suggested the setting up of a Permanent International Court and of a Permanent Secretariat. Bourgeois was anxious that the League should be equipped with an international defence force, but this proposal was turned down.

When the Allies began their deliberations in Paris there was no cut and dried scheme about the procedure to be followed; problems which turned up had to be settled individually and not in accordance with a comprehensive plan. "The treaties were thus in a sense improvised. They were never surveyed as a whole. Much of their weakness comes from this fact."<sup>1</sup> Nicolson<sup>2</sup> also criticized the conference because the ground was not adequately prepared beforehand. As late as 19th March, Wilson had not made up his mind whether the conference was engaged in drawing up a preliminary or a final treaty. For two months most of the delegates were of opinion that the Allied conference would be followed by negotiation with the enemy powers in a congress. But as time slipped past, this idea was discarded, and the demands of the Allies (often these were "maximum demands" drawn up in this form for discussion and negotiation with the enemy) were incorporated without alteration in a definitive treaty.

In a strict sense, however, many terms of the treaties were not dictated. Territorial changes which were embodied in the settlement had already taken place before the conference started; and

<sup>1</sup> Webster, in *The Treaty of Versailles and After*.      <sup>2</sup> *Peacemaking*, 1919.

the Allied statesmen merely gave formal *de jure* approval to these changes. There were forces at work in Europe, arising mainly from the vigorous spirit of nationalism which the war aroused, that nobody could have checked. All that could be done was to direct these forces into the right channel, and to prevent if possible the overweening ambition of the nationalist leaders of some smaller powers from seizing what was not in any sense their due.

There were two divergent forces pulling against each other in the councils of the peacemakers: the desire to restore Europe to something like its pre-war<sup>1</sup> state of security and prosperity, with, moreover, the hope of initiating a new era of peace and co-operation between the nations; and, directly opposed to this spirit, there was in the minds of most of the Allied statesmen and their peoples a firm belief that peace demanded the crushing of the enemy, and that the agony which they had suffered during the struggle deserved reward at the expense of the defeated. In the less restrained type of newspaper the glaring headlines, "Hun food snivel" or "The Junkers will cheat you yet," gave concrete expression to this vindictive feeling.

The harsher terms of the settlement, however, were not the work of statesmen intoxicated for the moment by victory; nor were they conceived only after the enemy had been defeated. Lloyd George pointed out that the main features of the Treaty of Versailles had already been decided upon long before hostilities ceased.<sup>2</sup> Beginning with Asquith's statement in 1914 that the war was being fought to restore independence to Belgium and Serbia, to give back Alsace-Lorraine to France, to guarantee protection to small and weak nations, and to vindicate international right against the tyranny of force, British and French statesmen later supplemented and made clear these fundamental points, and added others which, as the war progressed and new interests were involved, had to be considered. In a review of the peace problem in 1916, the British Foreign Office, besides repeating what had already been said, emphasized the principle of nationality as one that should influence the making of peace. The entrance into the war of Turkey and Italy, the conflicts that raged in the enemy's colonies, and the devastation which France, Belgium, and Serbia suffered were other factors that were bound to affect the final peace settlement. In a report dated 29th April, 1917,

<sup>1</sup> "Pre-war" in the text refers to the years before the Great War of 1914-18; similarly, "post-war" refers to the years of peace after the Great War.

<sup>2</sup> *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. I.

General Smuts envisaged the "destruction of the German colonial system with a view to the future security of all communications vital to the British Empire", and the tearing off from the Turkish Empire of all parts that might afford Germany "opportunity of expansion to the Far East and of endangering our position as an Asiatic Power". The only post-war addition to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles was the punishment of war-crimes; all the other main features were, in principle at least, agreed to before the armistice.

In respect of Austria-Hungary the peace settlement went far beyond what had been thought of while the war was going on. This was not the fault of the statesmen. The dissolution of the Habsburg Empire took place from within and not by the conscious act of the Allied leaders. The diverse nationalities which had been kept uneasily together while the central authority was strong, readily broke away when Austria succumbed to the blows of her adversaries. So also did the Turkish Empire disintegrate as the result of forces acting from within, helped admittedly by the money and military strength of the Allies.

The principle of self-determination, while in the abstract it seemed one against which nothing could be urged, proved in practice difficult to carry out. There were two obstacles to a complete policy of self-determination for the peoples of Europe. The first was this: in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe diverse racial elements were so interwoven that to mark off with justice and accuracy the boundaries of one nationality from another was impossible. Actually the treaties were comparatively successful in following out this principle. When the territorial changes had been made, barely three per cent of Europe's population remained under foreign rule.<sup>1</sup> The second and equally powerful obstacle to carrying out with any completeness the policy of self-determination was the secret agreements into which the Allies had entered with each other during the war.<sup>2</sup>

Italy joined the Allies after the signing of a secret treaty in London on 26th April, 1915. This treaty promised her, as a reward for her

<sup>1</sup> *The Hundred Years*: Guedalla.

<sup>2</sup> The secret treaties were: Agreement of March, 1915, between Britain, France, and Russia, promising Constantinople to Russia; Treaty of London (April, 1915); Franco-Russian Agreement (April, 1916) concerning Asiatic Turkey; Sykes-Picot Agreement (May, 1916); Russo-Japanese Agreement (July, 1916); Rumanian Treaty (August, 1916), promising Rumania the whole of Transylvania, &c.; Franco-Russian Treaty (March, 1917), giving Russia a free hand in Poland and guaranteeing to France Alsace-Lorraine, the Saar, and an independent Rhineland; Anglo-Japanese Treaty (February, 1917); St. Jean de Maurienne Agreement (April, 1917).

help, considerable tracts of enemy territory in Europe, including the Trentino, the Southern Tirol as far as the Brenner Pass, Istria, the northern coast of Dalmatia, and a number of islands. She was promised also equitable territorial compensation in Africa if Britain or France increased their colonial possessions in that continent, and some share in the control or possession of Turkish territory in the event of the partition of the Ottoman Empire. This treaty proposed to place under Italian rule a German population in the Tirol and Slavonic peoples in Dalmatia and the Adriatic Islands. But Asquith said that he was prepared to justify it "by ethnological, historical, or strategic considerations", while Sir Edward Grey rather more bluntly admitted that "in war you will have secret treaties. Many things regarded as criminal are regarded as inevitable in time of war".

Another arrangement which ignored the principle of self-determination was the Sykes-Picot Agreement signed in May, 1916. This virtually partitioned Asia Minor and the Arab areas of the Turkish Empire between Britain, France, and Russia. This agreement was made without the knowledge of Italy, and when she heard of it she also demanded a share in the spoil. This was conceded at a conference held in St. Jean de Maurienne on 19th April, 1917, when a zone in Asia Minor was allocated to her to be administered, and another as a sphere of influence. These agreements were difficult to reconcile with the promise of independence made during the war to the Arab rebels in Turkey.

A treaty which Britain signed with Japan in February, 1917, and to which France subsequently adhered, also caused difficulties when peace came. Britain promised to support Japan's claim to the German Pacific Islands north of the Equator, and to the rights possessed by Germany at Kiao Chau and in the province of Shantung. China protested with spirit against the Japanese occupation of her province, but Wilson yielded to Japan. He justified his surrender with the words: "I know that I shall be accused of violating my own principles; nevertheless I must work for world order and organization against anarchy and a return to the old militarism." He thought apparently that if Japan was driven out of the conference she would enter a military alliance with Russia and Germany.<sup>1</sup>

Long before the end of the war Wilson knew about the secret arrangements made by the Allies; the more important treaties were

<sup>1</sup> *Peacemaking, 1919*: Nicolson.

shown to him by Balfour early in 1917. How he intended to bend the Allies to his will is indicated in a letter which he wrote to Colonel House. "When the war is over we can force them (the Allied statesmen) to our way of thinking because by that time, among other things, they will be financially in our hands, but we cannot force them now."<sup>1</sup> When the actual tussle came about, it was not, however, the British and French statesmen who proved amenable. It was the American President who usually succumbed after a struggle to the acuteness of Lloyd George or the tenacity of Clemenceau. At times he relieved his feelings in an outburst of anger. On one occasion he gave orders for his immediate departure from France in the *George Washington*, and then he thought better of it and countermanded the order.

Although he yielded to Japan, Wilson was bitterly hostile to the territorial claims made by Italy, in particular her demand for Fiume, which had been promised to the Serbs. When Orlando, the Italian Foreign Minister, proved as obdurate as his adversary, Wilson appealed over the head of their delegate to the Italian people, thinking that the justice of his claim would reach their hearts. Instead, his appeal let loose a flood of indignant abuse, and the Italian Press spoke as though he were a criminal of the man whom a few months before they had welcomed with adulation. Eventually the Italians took matters into their own hands. In September, 1919, D'Annunzio, poet and soldier, raided and occupied the port at the head of a band of volunteers and governed it in the name of the Fatherland.

Clemenceau's desire to ensure France's security by isolating the German population on the west of the Rhine was a matter which provoked heated discussion for months. The French Premier wished to create a buffer state between France and Germany. Both Wilson and Lloyd George refused to support this plan, and it was only after the British and American representatives had given France a guarantee against German aggression that Clemenceau withdrew his demand for an independent Rhineland state. Later the American Senate refused to ratify this guarantee, a refusal which absolved Britain from fulfilling her promise. The French felt that they had been tricked, and their safety endangered by the sacrifice of a plan that had seemed to them essential, for a promise that proved empty.

On the question of reparation from Germany, Wilson needed delicate handling. France was determined to extract the last farthing

<sup>1</sup> *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters*, Vol. VII: R. Stannard Baker.

she could from the enemy. Lloyd George was prepared to be more moderate in his demands, and he realized that the sums which it was alleged Germany could pay were fantastic. But he was bound by pledges made during the General Election of 1918, and the least suspicion that he intended to show any mercy to the enemy, or even to treat such matters as reparation from a commonsense point of view, caused dangerous reactions among his supporters in the Commons. Further, while the Peace Conference was in progress, Lloyd George was the subject of bitter attacks by Lord Northcliffe in his newspapers. Northcliffe was offended because he had not been appointed as one of the peace delegates, and he lost no opportunity of hurling abuse upon the Premier. In April a telegram signed by 370 M.P.s, roused by the attacks of the Northcliffe Press, was sent to Lloyd George inviting his attention to the reports that, instead of demanding the complete reparation that was due, he was considering merely what could be exacted from the impoverished German. That this was a reasonable approach to the subject did not seem to strike his critics. Lloyd George was forced to break off the negotiations in Paris. Returning to England he delivered a fighting speech in the Commons which silenced the cavillers for a time.

Extravagant claims for reparation were bandied about. These ranged from £40,000,000,000, which M. Klotz, the French Minister of Finance, thought possible, to a modest £2,000,000,000, the estimate of a committee of British experts. Another British committee, the chairman of which was Lord Cunliffe, Governor of the Bank of England, decided that it would not be impossible to mulct the enemy to the tune of £24,000,000,000, and in its report protested that fears expressed about the ill effects on Allied countries of the payment by the enemy of huge sums were not well founded. Both Bonar Law and Lloyd George regarded the conclusions of this committee as "a fantastic chimera". American experts estimated that Germany was capable of paying £13,000,000,000.

A small group of economists doubted whether it was possible to get large payments from Germany, and, even if it was possible, whether it was advisable to transfer huge sums from one country to another with a consequent upsetting of the delicate balance of international currency. Most statesmen and financial experts, however, saw no difficulty in the matter at all. The *Economist* of 7th December, 1918, wrote: "As for collecting the bill without damaging our industries, this should not be a very difficult matter." In a later issue (5th April, 1919) this authority said: "In normal times, when



it is allowed to do business on business methods, Lombard Street has little difficulty in transferring any amount of money between nations that are in economic communication. . . ." To assess the amount to be demanded from Germany was so difficult that eventually the Allies in Paris shelved the decision by agreeing to the appointment of a Reparation Commission. The aim of this commission, which was set up on 25th January, 1919, was to discover the maximum payment that Germany might be forced to make without utterly destroying the fabric of her economic and financial life. The claims for compensation submitted by the different Allies for the alleged destruction of their territories and their goods were so extravagant that the total sum could not in any circumstances have been paid by any nation.

What reparation from Germany could be claimed had been agreed to before the armistice. The Allies affirmed that, since Germany was responsible for the outbreak of war, she was therefore liable "for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated Powers and to their property during the period of the belligerency of each . . . by such aggression by land, by sea and from the air, and in general all damage as defined in Annex 1 hereto". In this Annex 1 was a claim which Wilson swallowed only with difficulty. It was a claim made by the Allies for the payment by the enemy of the separation allowances granted during the war to the families of those mobilized, and of the pensions and compensations in respect of the injury or death of combatants payable by the Allied Governments. Eventually the President was convinced of the justice of the Allied demand. In the words of Keynes, ". . . the decisive moment, in the disintegration of the President's moral position and the clouding of his mind, was when at last, to the dismay of his advisers, he allowed himself to be persuaded that the expenditure of the Allied Governments on pensions and separation allowances could be fairly regarded as 'damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated Powers by German aggression by land, by sea and from the air' in a sense in which the other expenses of the war could not be so regarded."<sup>1</sup>

By a Berlin Convention (1884) it had been agreed that in the event of a European War the Great Powers would not attack each other's African possessions. This agreement was broken in 1914-18 when the German colonies were occupied by Allied troops, and after the war was over there was no suggestion that these should be

<sup>1</sup> *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*: Keynes.

returned. In view of the disinterested motives which the Allies had professed while hostilities were going on, it was difficult for them to annex these territories in the pre-war imperialist way, so a system of "mandates" under the League of Nations (proposed by General Smuts) was approved. At first there was opposition to this system of mandates from Australia and New Zealand, and even from Smuts himself as far as the German colony next to his own country in South Africa was concerned. Both France and Japan also disliked the idea of mandates. Only Lloyd George and Wilson gave it unqualified support. Hughes, the Australian representative at the conference, wished for complete control over any German territory that might be handed over to his country's Government. On this point he had a passage at arms with President Wilson, who asked him pointedly: "Mr. Hughes, am I to understand that if the whole civilized world asks Australia to agree to a mandate in respect of these islands, Australia is prepared still to defy the appeal of the whole civilized world?"<sup>1</sup> Hughes cheerfully agreed that Australia was prepared to defy the world.

Modifications were made in the original scheme which eventually satisfied everybody. Three different kinds of mandates were instituted. The first applied to communities which could be almost provisionally recognized as independent (e.g. territories freed from Turkish control), the task of the mandatory power being merely to help in the administration, &c., of the territory. The second type of mandate was concerned with backward races, for whose welfare the mandatory power was made almost entirely responsible. The third type of mandate (and this satisfied Hughes and others) applied to certain areas which, owing to their small size and sparse population, could with advantage be governed by the mandatory power not as separate communities but as integral parts of its own territory. All the mandatory powers were bound to render to the Council of the League of Nations a yearly report on the territories assigned to them.

Rapid progress in drawing up a settlement at Versailles was not possible. There were divergences of opinion among the Allies on all the main questions, including an independent Rhineland state, reparation, the Saar, the disposal of the German fleet (this was solved by the German sailors themselves), the blockade, and the Polish Corridor. It was fortunate, perhaps, that the enemy powers were not called in for consultation. If this had happened, the

<sup>1</sup> *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. I: Lloyd George.

German diplomats might have been able so to intensify the disagreements between the Allies as to bring about the complete collapse of the conference. It survived, and by the beginning of May a treaty was ready for submission to Germany.

## CHAPTER II

### PEACE TREATIES

THE peace treaty which the Allies drew up in Paris, and which was signed under duress by Germany at Versailles, contained 449 articles. The first 26 of these dealt with the formation of a League of Nations and its constitution, this Covenant being an integral part of all the treaties concluded between the Allies and their enemies.

By the Treaty of Versailles Germany lost approximately 26,000 square miles of territory and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  million of her population. In the west the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine were restored to France, from whom Germany had taken them in 1871, Eupen and Malmédy were surrendered to Belgium, and part of Schleswig to Denmark. In the east Germany's losses were much greater. In accordance with Wilson's Points an independent Poland appeared again in Europe, and to this state Germany ceded 17,800 square miles of territory from East and West Prussia, Posen, and Silesia. To give Poland access to the sea a strip of German territory was ceded to her (it was 100 miles long and 50 wide), this Polish Corridor separating East Prussia from the remainder of the Reich. Danzig, with a hinterland of 750 square miles, an essential port for the economic freedom of the Poles, was made a Free City under the protection of the League of Nations. Finally, in the east Lithuania got Memel. It was agreed that after the ratification of the treaty plebiscites would be held in Eupen-Malmédy, Schleswig, East and West Prussia, and Silesia, in order to define the new boundaries in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants.

Germany also surrendered her colonies, these being given under mandate of the League of Nations to the Allied Powers. The actual allocation of the territories was not laid down in the Versailles Treaty. Subsequently the following mandates were agreed to: German S.W. Africa to the Union of South Africa; East Africa to Britain (mainly) and Belgium; the Cameroons and Togoland to Britain and France; German Samoan Islands to New Zealand;

other German Pacific possessions south of the equator to Australia; Kiao Chau and the German Pacific Islands north of the equator to Japan. The population of the ceded colonial empire was 13 millions. The only British Dominion which had no desire to be burdened with the responsibility of administering enemy territory was Canada.

The military and naval clauses of the treaty were designed, first, to compel the enemy to comply with the territorial and other clauses, and, second, to disarm her and render her impotent for as long as the Victor Powers could impose their will. With the first object in view, the Allies forced Germany to permit the occupation of her territory west of the Rhine by their troops for a period of 15 years, with progressive evacuation at earlier dates as certain conditions of the treaty were fulfilled. A demilitarized zone was laid down on the east of the Rhine to a depth of 32 miles; the Germans agreed not to keep armed troops or build fortifications in this area.

Very severe conditions of disarmament were imposed on Germany in order to keep her helpless in the future. She was restricted to a voluntary army of 100,000 effectives, and to a small navy—6 battleships of 10,000 tons, 6 light cruisers, 12 destroyers, and 12 torpedo boats. She was allowed no submarines, and no military or naval air force. The fortifications of Heligoland and other places commanding the routes between the North Sea and the Baltic had to be dismantled. Germany also agreed to limit the manufacture of armaments, and to refrain from building tanks or making poison gas. For some years Commissions of Control were employed to see that the disarmament of Germany was carried out. Their work was beset with very considerable difficulties. Nevertheless, by July, 1927, the Conference of Ambassadors, representing the Allied Powers, was in a position to make a formal report to the League Council that the disarmament of Germany had been satisfactorily completed in accordance with the conditions of the treaty.

Germany was forced to acknowledge that she had been responsible for the outbreak of war (this "war-guilt" clause was one against which the Germans protested with particular vehemence), and that, consequently, she was liable for the loss and damage caused to the Allies by the hostilities. She agreed to make reparation, but no definite sum was mentioned in the treaty. Nevertheless certain immediate demands were made: Germany surrendered a large number of merchant ships, and delivered stocks of coal and cattle to France and Belgium. She agreed also to continue supplying

France, Belgium, and Italy with large quantities of coal for ten years. The coal mines of the Saar valley were handed over to France, the district itself being placed under the administration of the League of Nations. At the end of fifteen years a plebiscite was to be held to decide the future administration of the Saar. In the matter of money payments the Allies demanded £1,000,000,000 from Germany on account between 1919 and 1921.

There were also political and economic clauses in the Versailles Treaty. Germany was forbidden to unite with Austria. Her waterways were placed under international control. The property of Germans in Allied countries was liable to confiscation to meet the claims of Allied citizens on Germans for debts, and also to be used as reparation payments. By various provisions of the treaty the Allies were in a position to deprive Germany, if they cared, of everything she possessed outside her new frontiers. The trial of the ex-Kaiser and of Germans accused by the Allies of war-crimes was also provided for.

The draft treaty was presented to the German delegates on 7th May in the Trianon Palace at Versailles. Clemenceau's opening speech, couched in courteous terms, fixed the sole guilt for the war on Germany. To this accusation Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, Germany's Foreign Minister, replied: "The hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who have perished since 11th November by reason of the blockade were killed with cold deliberation after our adversaries had conquered and victory had been assured to them. Think of this when you speak of guilt and punishment." In a written reply to the Allies the Germans' chief objection to the peace terms was that they were not compatible with Wilson's Fourteen Points, upon which they had surrendered. But Wilson would not hear of this. He had by this time convinced himself of the justice of even the most flagrant violation of his own principles. He had fallen into the pit that awaits every idealist whose vision proves but a baseless fabric that melts into thin air. He distorted the facts, and denied vehemently and stubbornly that he had failed. In a speech which he delivered to the Allies on 13th May, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau said that "those who sign this treaty will sign the death sentence of many millions of German men, women, and children". Nevertheless, there was nothing for the Germans to do but to sign. The Allies held the whip-hand, and on 28th June in the famous Hall of Mirrors at Versailles the treaty was signed.

After the ratification of the Versailles Treaty on 10th January,

1920, arrangements were made to hold plebiscites in the agreed areas. It was by a faked plebiscite that Eupen-Malmédy was awarded to Belgium. There was no secret ballot. Instead, those of the inhabitants who wished to remain German were called upon to sign a public document to that effect. Of a population of 60,000 only 271 signed.<sup>1</sup> The plebiscite in Schleswig gave the north of the state to Denmark and the south to Germany, with a decisive majority in each sector. The Marienwerder district of West Prussia and the Allenstein district of East Prussia both voted by a large majority for inclusion with Germany. The most difficult question to decide was the fate of Upper Silesia. As a whole the vote was in favour of Germany,<sup>2</sup> but there were Polish majorities in certain areas in the south and east. France refused to accept the reasonable solution of returning nearly the whole of the province, except the south-eastern districts, to Germany. Eventually the task of making a decision was handed over, with definite instructions, to the League of Nations. The final plan which was adopted by the Allies in November, 1921, was based on the report of the League Council. The north-west part of Upper Silesia, by far the poorer in industrial resources, remained with Germany, while the much more valuable south-east went to Poland. The dividing of what was a complete economic and industrial unit into two caused great difficulties. Complicated arrangements, covering the administration of railways, customs, &c., had to be made to keep the economic structure from falling to pieces.

In January, 1920, the Dutch Government was asked to surrender the ex-Kaiser William II, who had taken refuge in Holland. This request was refused, and the Allies, although they made formal protests to the Dutch, were inwardly relieved that this matter had been so disposed of. The proposal of the Allies to bring to trial Germans accused of having committed acts "in violation of the laws and customs of war" was also one that seemed likely to cause embarrassment. At first the Allies were in favour of holding these trials in their own courts, but this plan was turned down. Eventually the German Government agreed to bring to trial before the Supreme Court at Leipzig a batch of twelve persons alleged to have committed definite breaches of the laws of war. The Allied Governments conducted the prosecution. The trials took place in 1921, and of the twelve accused six only were convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Thereafter this provision of the Versailles

<sup>1</sup> *The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.

<sup>2</sup> The actual vote was: for Germany, 707,605; for Poland, 479,359.

Treaty was quietly allowed to lapse. In the lists prepared by the Allies of war criminals whom they wished brought to trial were the names of the Crown Prince, Hindenburg, and Ludendorff.

When the terms of the treaty were made public, its reception in Britain was on the whole favourable. "We are all prepared to say with the utmost confidence," said Lord Robert Cecil, "that the broad lines of the treaty are right." As a body the Liberal and Labour opposition in Parliament approved of the settlement. In France the general opinion was that the Germans had got off lightly. General Smuts took a leading part in the Peace Conference, and, although there were sections in the treaty of which he disapproved, he claimed for it "two achievements of far-reaching importance for the world". The one was the destruction of Prussian militarism; the other the institution of the League of Nations.

On the other hand, there were dissident voices. Among these was that of J. M. Keynes, who, in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (written in 1919), examined the provisions of the treaty in detail, and proved that it was absolutely impossible for Germany to fulfil many of the demands made upon her. While the Allies were determined to exact from Germany large reparations both in kind and money, the treaty aimed at the systematic destruction of the three main factors on which depended Germany's economic system before the war: namely, her overseas commerce as represented by her merchant fleet, colonies, foreign investments, &c.; the exploitation of her coal and iron and the industries built on them; and her transport and tariff systems. Keynes concluded that, with the loss of part of her territory rich in minerals, Germany would be quite unable to deliver for long even comparatively small quantities of coal, for example, to the Allies, and that any extravagant demand for reparation in money would be quite useless.

Later critics, when the faults of the treaty had become apparent in course of time, were bitter in their condemnation of it. "As a territorial settlement it was grotesque; as a military settlement it was intolerable," wrote Wingfield-Stratford.<sup>1</sup> But most historians agreed that it was a document which represented faithfully the spirit and temper of the time, and that in the months following the war it would have been impossible for even supermen to devise a peace settlement that was moderate and just.

The Treaty of Versailles disappointed its makers and turned out badly. In a contribution to a book published in 1935<sup>2</sup> Professor

<sup>1</sup> *The Harvest of Victory*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Treaty of Versailles and After*.



A. J. Toynbee discussed the reasons for this. First, the peace was dictated. Had there been negotiation with the enemy the Germans would probably have fulfilled their obligations to the best of their means instead of striving, as they did, to evade them. Secondly, Professor Toynbee pointed out that men who win wars have not the temperament suited for the drawing up of a constructive peace plan. Moreover, they seldom realize that, while the war has been in progress, all sorts of changes have taken place, and that the peace plans with which they started require modification in view of the new situation at the end of hostilities. Statesmen are blind to these changes; their eyes are directed backwards to the pre-war state of the world. They do not realize that a satisfactory peace is not erected on the basis of a *status quo* that is dead, but that the peace itself is the foundation stone of a new order to be built in the future. Finally, the Treaty of Versailles was weakened by the contradictory aims which the Allies had in view. They wished to weaken the enemy, and at the same time they tried to build up an ideal system of international relations.

The weakest parts of the treaty proved to be, in order, the reparation and war-guilt clauses, disarmament, the League of Nations, and certain territorial changes in Europe. Reparations on the scale which the Allies demanded proved impossible. Disarmament was forced upon Germany, but was not carried out by the Allies, and eventually Germany freed herself from the restrictions of the treaty and openly rearmed on an immense scale. The League of Nations, although it did valuable work both for peace and for international co-operation in various spheres of work, was a weaker instrument for preventing war than its makers had hoped. Finally, when Germany became strong she speedily planned to revoke or to modify certain of the territorial clauses of the Versailles Treaty. One curious feature of the treaty was its failure to restrict in any way Germany's civil aviation. Within a few years Germany became the chief civil air power in Europe. It did not seem to dawn on the Allies that civil aeroplanes could be transformed with comparative ease into military and naval machines.

At the Peace Conference only one of the Allied and Associated Powers refused to sign the treaty. This was China, who objected to the cession of Kiao Chau to Japan. China's attitude was of little account. The blow which weakened the peace treaty was the refusal of the U.S.A. Senate to ratify it.

President Wilson returned to America at the end of June, 1919,

and in the following month laid the Treaty of Versailles before the Senate. Now he was to reap the fruits of his previous neglect of the Republicans and of the antagonism he had aroused. He denied that the compromises in the treaty cut to the quick any of his principles. He painted a glowing picture of the "generous, high-minded, statesman-like co-operation" shown at the Peace Conference and urged that "the salvation of the world depended on the complete acceptance of the treaty as the charter of a new and idyllic world order".<sup>1</sup> It was no use. America was by this time anxious to return to "normalcy" and to cut itself adrift from European entanglements, and against this spirit the eloquence of the President beat unavailingly. It was in vain that he urged the people to "go forward, with lifted eyes and freshened spirit, to follow the vision". What they wanted was to keep both their eyes and feet fixed on the solid ground beneath them. On 19th November, 1919, the final vote in the Senate went against the President and the treaty. Later the U.S.A. concluded independent treaties, mainly of a formal nature, with her war-time enemies.

Five years after the close of the war, on Armistice Day, 1923, Wilson spoke to a crowd gathered before his house in Washington to do him honour. "I am not one of those that have the least anxiety about the triumph of the principles I have stood for. I have seen fools resist Providence before and I have seen their destruction, as will come upon these again—utter destruction and contempt. That we shall prevail is as sure as that God reigns."<sup>1</sup> He died three months later.

After peace with Germany had been concluded, the deliberations of the Allies moved more slowly. The Treaty of Saint Germain-en-Laye was signed by Austria on 10th September, 1919; the Treaty of Neuilly by Bulgaria on 27th November, 1919; and the Treaty of Trianon by Hungary on 4th June, 1920.

The peace settlement broke up completely the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and left both Austria and Hungary as small land-locked states. New sovereign powers, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, were born, and Poland was restored to independence. Yugoslavia, a Serb-Croat-Slovene state, was built on the foundation of pre-war Serbia with the addition of territory taken mainly from Austria and Hungary, plus a strip of land from Bulgaria. Czechoslovakia was formed by the union of the Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia with Slovakia and Ruthenia, all of these part of the old

<sup>1</sup> *Only Yesterday*: Allen.

Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this new state there were districts bordering Silesia, Saxony, and Bavaria, with a population predominantly German. This violation of the principle of nationality was condoned in order to give to the Czechs a naturally strong mountain frontier against Germany.

Austria justly protested against the inclusion of 3,000,000 German Austrians in Czechoslovakia, of 200,000 in Italy, and of several thousands in Yugoslavia. While the Allies admitted that the settlement violated the racial principle in these areas they refused to consider any change. Hungary also had reason to complain. The Allies defined the frontiers of Hungary so as to make her a purely Magyar state. In doing so they placed no less than a third (3,000,000) of her Magyar population under foreign rule.

The Treaty of Sèvres, which the Allies forced Turkey to sign on 10th August, 1920, aimed at breaking up the Ottoman Empire completely. It deprived Turkey of all control in Armenia, Thrace, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine, besides allowing the formation of an independent kingdom of the Hedjaz in Arabia. To Greece was granted the sovereignty of the Ægean Islands, except the Dodecanese which fell to Italy. The city of Constantinople, moreover, was to be placed under Allied control. The victors were not content to leave the Turks masters even of their national home of Anatolia, but proposed to give a mandate over Smyrna to the Greeks, the hated and despised enemies of the Turks. This insult was too much. A nationalist revolt spread rapidly in Turkey, and the Allies were forced to amend their first proposals. A second and final treaty was concluded with Turkey at Lausanne on 24th July, 1923.

In the *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. II, Lloyd George affirmed that the treaties were never given a chance by the "miscellaneous and unimpressive array of second-rate statesmen" who handled them for fifteen years after their conclusion. He pointed out that, while the treaties did not give the peace and security which their makers had hoped, yet they did not fail entirely, and that much of the peace settlement endured for long. The treaties vindicated international right by punishing the aggressors and forcing territory from them. No other treaty ever emancipated so many subject races. The victors themselves were responsible for the failure to bring about disarmament, for it was they who were guilty of "an outrageous breach of faith. In effect and in practice they repudiated the undertaking they had given." The League of Nations falsified the hopes of its inspirers because of the "weakness and vacillation"

of the Allied statesmen of the post-war era. The International Labour Organization (one of the greatest triumphs of the League, in Lloyd George's opinion) was of inestimable value to Europe and the world. Had the League set about revising the treaties, as it had the power to do, the worst anomalies might have been removed and the peace settlement might have been one of greater permanence than it proved to be.

## CHAPTER III

### DYING WAR

#### (a) TURKEY

IN the course of their history the Turks have repeatedly shown themselves to be indomitable if merciless fighters, and during the Great War they did not belie this reputation. Again, when the Turks have been defeated, they have more than once saved themselves from complete disaster by stirring up dissension in some way or another among their enemies, and so gaining a measure of relief for themselves. So it happened after the Great War. On the Turkish question the unity of the Allies—never very strong—crumbled, and the Turks, skilfully taking advantage of this, were able to conclude a final peace on much more favourable terms than the other defeated nations. As a curious sidelight on the troubles that beset those who venture to despoil the Turks, the situation which developed in Arabia between 1918 and 1924 is interesting. There two rivals claimed the overlordship of the country, Ibn Saud, Chief of the Wahhabis, and the Emir Husein of the Hedjaz. An intermittent struggle went on between the rivals, one of whom, Ibn Saud, was subsidized by the India Office (this in virtue of a treaty concluded in December, 1915, in order to engage the Wahhabi chief on the side of the Allies), while the other, Husein, was receiving money and arms from the Foreign Office (again in virtue of a war-time arrangement to ensure the Emir's help against the Turks). The Gilbertian situation arose, as Gathorne-Hardy pointed out,<sup>1</sup> of the India Office and the Foreign Office being at war until the eventual withdrawal of the subsidies.

It seemed to the Allies in 1918 that Turkey was so completely crushed as to be unable to resist any demands made upon her. In May, 1919, the Greeks were allowed to land troops in Asia Minor (Allied warships protected the landing) and to occupy Smyrna and the district round about it. This move was intended to anticipate a possible landing by Italian forces. The invasion of their homeland

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34.*

by Greeks, whom they regarded contemptuously as "hereditary bondsmen", provoked a storm of indignation among the Turks, and led to the immediate rise of a vigorous nationalist movement. The British Foreign Minister, Lord Curzon, was not too happy about this Greek adventure, but Lloyd George, whose feelings were anti-Turk, had no qualms about supporting it.

All that the defeated Turks needed to make dangerous the nationalist spirit which surged through the country was a leader; and a leader was already at hand. This was Mustapha Kemal Pasha, a soldier whose defence of Gallipoli in 1915 had made him a heroic figure in the eyes of his countrymen. Kemal organized the nationalist movement in Anatolia, making Angora (Ankara) his headquarters. At the end of 1919 elections were held in Turkey and Kemal's supporters gained a victory over their opponents. In the Parliament which met at Constantinople on 28th January, 1920, the Kemalists adopted a National Pact, which demanded that Turkey should be left with her homeland of Anatolia intact, that she should retain Constantinople and Thrace in Europe, and that she should be freed from foreign control. In March, 1920, the Allies formally occupied Constantinople, and expelled the Nationalists. Some were deported to Malta, but others fled to Angora and continued to act as a National Assembly, now hostile to the Sultan's Government in Constantinople. The Sultan, Mehmed VI, became merely a tool in the hands of the Western Powers. This degradation of the Sultan-Caliph provoked a dangerous agitation among Moslems, for they revered the Caliph, the successor of Mohammed and the Commander of the Faithful, as their spiritual and secular head.<sup>1</sup>

In May, 1920, came the announcement of the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres. According to the treaty Turkey was to lose not only her Arab Empire—this the Turks were prepared to accept—but also to surrender Smyrna to the Greeks for five years, after which a plebiscite was to be held to decide its ultimate fate. The Kemalists were determined not to concede one inch of Anatolia and rejected the treaty. To bring them to reason a Greek army advanced in June from Smyrna into the interior and drove back the Nationalist forces, not yet thoroughly organized or equipped. It seemed as though Turkey was to endure the humiliation of a complete surrender, for in August, 1920, the Sultan's Government in Constantinople signed the Treaty of Sèvres.

In October a dramatic turn in the Turkish situation occurred

<sup>1</sup> *Grey Wolf*: H. C. Armstrong.

with the sudden death of King Alexander of Greece, the result of his being bitten by a pet monkey. A general election followed, and Venizelos, the pro-Ally Prime Minister, suffered a heavy defeat at the polls. With characteristic perverseness the Greeks now recalled to the throne the pro-German Constantine, who had been expelled in 1917. This alienated the Allies, particularly the French and the Italians, who had no longer the same desire as before to encourage the Greeks in their campaign in Anatolia. The Greeks, however, continued their advance slowly, driving the Kemalists in front of them, and by August, 1921, they were within forty miles of Angora. There they were held up, and in the following month suffered a defeat at Sakaria River. This was the beginning of the end of the adventure. The French were anxious to get clear of this Greek entanglement, and M. Franklin-Bouillon was entrusted with the task of making peace with the Turks. This was done secretly in October, 1921. Thereafter the Nationalists could depend on supplies of arms not only from Russia, who had been furnishing her so far, but also from France.

Kemal was in no hurry. He had the situation well in hand. He continued to organize and equip his forces in the fastnesses of Anatolia, knowing well that time was on his side, and that with the passing of each month the position of the enemy was becoming weaker.<sup>1</sup> The Greeks, entrenched in Anatolia, could do nothing but hold their lines, uncertain of what course to take or of what might happen at any moment. The Italians were by this time eager to regain their freedom of action, and, following the example of the French, concluded an agreement with the Turks in April, 1922. Only the British remained faithful to the Greek cause, and in the British Cabinet there was no unanimity about this adventure that had to be supported. The Indian Government was thoroughly alarmed at the unrest among the natives which the pro-Greek policy of Britain was rousing, and Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, allowed the Viceroy to publish a memorandum representing the Indian Government's pro-Turkish point of view. This was done without the knowledge of the British Cabinet, an unconstitutional proceeding that made Montagu's resignation inevitable.

In August, 1922, Kemal made his long-awaited attack on the Greek lines. The Greeks fled precipitately to the coast, with the enemy in close pursuit. The Turks entered Smyrna and butchered the foe with a professional thoroughness that made the "bloody

<sup>1</sup> *Grey Wolf*: H. C. Armstrong.

conflict " which had followed the Greeks' first landing in Anatolia seem very small beer. The victorious Nationalist army now pressed north towards the Straits, and a serious situation arose. Their aim was to cross the Straits and seize Constantinople. Barring their way was merely a small Allied force. At Chanak, an advance post on the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles, were a body of 300 British soldiers, supported by the British Mediterranean Fleet at anchor in the Sea of Marmora, and detachments of French and Italian troops. The Kemalists came within sight of Chanak, and the question of whether they would continue their advance or not became one of vital importance.

Had the Allies been working in close unity the situation would have been dangerous enough; as it was, with the French and Italians determined in no circumstances to fight, and Kemal well aware of the dissensions among his enemies, the peril could hardly be exaggerated. In the British Cabinet the war group was in control, and, according to Wingfield-Stratford,<sup>1</sup> "displayed all the lighthearted pugnacity of the palmiest Jingo tradition. They acted as if they neither expected nor desired to avoid conflict." The Government addressed an appeal to the Dominions, and the replies they received were not encouraging. Australia and New Zealand, with memories of the Gallipoli tragedy, were prepared to collaborate with Britain, but neither Canada nor South Africa showed any enthusiasm for a new war against Turkey.

A group of ministers, among whom Winston Churchill, the Colonial Secretary, had great influence, prepared a *communiqué*, which they issued to the Press on 17th September, stressing the seriousness of the crisis, and announcing that the Government had appealed to the Balkan states and to the Dominions for help, and that France and Italy were behind Britain in the policy adopted. This announcement made the cleavage between Britain and her allies complete. The *communiqué* had been published without the knowledge of the British Foreign Office (Lord Curzon was "infuriated" by it) or of the French and Italian Governments. Apart from committing France to a policy which she did not approve, Britain offended her by seeming to interfere with the Balkan states, whom France was already considering as her own *protégés*. Both the French and Italian detachments were withdrawn from Chanak, and Britain was left alone with her small force to face a vigorous Turkish army, proudly conscious of its recent victory over the Greeks.

<sup>1</sup> *The Harvest of Victory*.



The British Cabinet continued to behave with complete recklessness. Instructions were sent to General Harington at Chanak to deliver an ultimatum to the Turks—an action which would probably have precipitated an attack. Harington wisely disregarded these instructions, and, instead, made a move to get into peaceful communication with the Turkish leaders in order to arrange some amicable agreement. He was successful, and on 3rd October a conference was opened at Mudania. There were still difficulties, but neither Kemal nor Harington was unreasonable. The Nationalists agreed to an armistice (11th October), and East Thrace was left in the hands of Allied troops while the negotiations for a peace settlement were in progress. A treaty was finally signed at Lausanne on 24th July, 1923. Turkey gained all that the supporters of the National Pact had demanded except West Thrace. She retained Anatolia, Constantinople, and East Thrace. She surrendered her Arab Empire, and her rights in Egypt, the Sudan, and Cyprus. By the Treaty of Lausanne the freedom of the Dardanelles was guaranteed, and zones on each side of the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmora were demilitarized.

In his *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. II, Lloyd George insisted that, in the British Cabinet's attitude towards the Turks at the time of the Chanak crisis, there was no element of bluff. He himself was quite prepared to fight, and was certain of victory. The "wretched business" was made worse by the treachery of the Allies. "The Italians sold arms to Mustapha Kemal to fight the Greeks, and were paid out of money supplied by Moscow. The French Government negotiated a secret treaty with Kemal behind the backs of the British Ministry." Lloyd George's conclusion was that, with the withdrawal of British troops from the Asiatic shores of the Dardanelles in sight of the Turkish army, "the habit of surrender had been inculcated and our policy developed into a general retreat, and the retreat into an utter rout".

#### (b) EASTERN EUROPE

After the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, the Soviet Government had to face not only counter-revolutionary attacks by armies of White Russians, but also intervention by the Western Powers on behalf of these enemies of the new régime. Between 1918 and 1922 the Civil War raged. After the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March, 1918, the Germans occupied the Ukraine

and set up a Cossack Government there under German control. These German troops were the enemies of the Bolsheviks and prepared at any moment to carry out operations against them. When the armistice was signed in November, 1918, Germany evacuated the Ukraine, but there remained on the western frontier of Russia large armies of Poles and Rumanians hostile to the Bolsheviks.

At one time fourteen foreign powers were more or less actively engaged in operations against the Soviet Government. In the north British troops co-operated with White Russians in Murmansk and Archangel. In the south French ships, after the armistice with Germany, sailed into the Black Sea carrying supplies for General Denikin, who was in command of the anti-Bolshevik troops there. French divisions, moreover, were landed at Odessa and in the Crimea to co-operate with Denikin. In the east the Japanese occupied Vladivostok, and in conjunction with detachments of American troops started a drive westwards through Siberia. They were soon in touch with an army of 70,000 Czech soldiers who had been attached to the Russian armies when the Revolution broke out. The Bolsheviks arranged to evacuate them by the long route through Siberia to Vladivostok, where they were to be shipped via America to Europe. When the Czechs were entrained in small detachments along part of their route, the Bolsheviks, fearing that they might be induced to join with the White Russians, attempted, with only partial success, to disarm them. The Czechs managed to combine, and it was with their aid that the Whites retained control of the Trans-Siberian Railway.<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1919 came the testing time for the Soviet. The Whites, now well organized and well supplied by the Allies with materials of war, were eager to open their attack. Moscow was the centre to which the White offensives were directed, and, in the north, south, and west, armies prepared to march against this Soviet stronghold. The chief danger came first from the east, when a formidable White army under Admiral Kolchak moved westwards through Siberia. The Bolsheviks could not withstand this force, which poured over the boundary between Asiatic and European Russia and was soon on the line of the Upper Volga. Then the movement was spent.

<sup>1</sup> This Czech Legion comprised a Czech emigrant force which had been raised in Russia in 1914, and the thousands of Czech deserters and prisoners of war from the armies of the Central Powers. The march of this force in 1918-20 across 5000 miles of hostile territory was one of the most amazing "campaigns" of the war years. Eventually they were evacuated and reached their homes in an independent Czechoslovakia. Gustav Becvar, one of the legionaries, told the complete story in *The Lost Legion*.

Towards the end of May the Soviet opened a successful counter-attack; now it was the Bolsheviks who were pushing their way eastwards with the White Russians in retreat before them. The Reds continued their drive for over a thousand miles to Irkutsk on Lake Baikal, and by then the White threat from the east was no longer serious.

In June, 1919, Trotsky was appointed Commissar for War, and to him fell the task of creating a new Red Army. He showed genius for the work and, with but the remnants of the old Imperial forces to build upon, he speedily trained and organized peasants and factory workers into a formidable fighting force. Despite the opposition of some of his colleagues, he made use of officers of the Imperial Army who were willing to co-operate with the Soviet, and soon the Bolshevik forces were superior both in discipline and in leadership to those of the Whites. In addition to building his armies Trotsky had to conduct for two and a half years not one war but a whole series in every part of the sprawling Russian territory. At one time fighting was going on on sixteen fronts, with all of which Trotsky had to keep in touch. To him was due largely the final success of the military operations of the Bolsheviks. He was ably helped by new leaders whom the Civil War brought to the front.

In the summer of 1919 came an attack on the Bolsheviks from the south by a force under General Denikin. He advanced northwards through the Ukraine and was within 125 miles of Moscow before he was stopped. Then, as had happened to Kolchak, the Bolsheviks turned against the enemy and delivered such blows as to demoralize them completely. By the beginning of 1920 only a remnant of Denikin's army remained in the Crimea, the leader himself having fled to Turkey. One further attack came from the south in the late autumn of 1920. What remained of Denikin's forces was reorganized by a more capable leader, General Wrangel, but he had no greater success than his predecessor in his campaign against the Bolsheviks. His army was driven back to the Crimea and eventually cleared out of the country.

The third drive against the Bolsheviks in 1919 was made in the autumn from the north. The White leader Yudenitch advanced from the White Sea towards Petrograd (Leningrad), the seat of the Soviet Government at this time. It was a critical moment. There was no Red army to defend the city, and Lenin wished to evacuate it and transfer the Government to Moscow. But Stalin, the Commissar for Nationalities in the Soviet, managed to raise disorganized

bands of factory and other workers in the city, who had no training and no proper weapons, but were prepared to bar the advance of the enemy. What the result would have been had the Whites attacked it is impossible to say. No attack came; Yudenitch retreated, and Petrograd was saved.

By February, 1920, the Red armies were in possession of Murmansk and Archangel. They had the situation well in hand by this time. The White forces were scattered, their leaders in flight like Yudenitch and Denikin, or captured and shot like Kolchak. The intervention of the Western Powers, moreover, was at an end. The evacuation of French troops had been started in April, 1919, and that of the British in North Russia in the autumn of the same year.

In the spring of 1920 the only formidable force that threatened the Bolsheviks was a Polish army on their western frontier. Marshal Pilsudski, hero of the Polish nationalist movement, launched an attack against the Soviet, hoping to seize the Ukraine and incorporate it into his new state. The Polish troops reached Kiev. Then, as before, the Red armies made a successful counter-offensive, led by their two greatest leaders, Budenny and Tukhachevsky. The Poles were forced to retreat to within six miles of Warsaw, with the enemy in close pursuit, and it looked as though Pilsudski's adventure was to recoil with disastrous consequences on his own head. Then came another turn of fortune. The French rushed supplies to the Poles and gave them, moreover, the services of a brilliant leader, Weygand, and his staff. Pilsudski proved that he was not beaten, and drove the Russians back. In October, 1920, a provisional peace was made (the final Treaty of Riga was ratified in March, 1921) and the Soviet Government was freed at last from the dangers of serious war. In the east military operations continued intermittently, and it was not till the end of 1922 that the Japanese eventually left Russian soil.

British intervention in Russia was a matter that caused considerable discussion. In the Government the most ardent advocates of intervention against the Bolsheviks were Lord Curzon and Winston Churchill. Lloyd George<sup>1</sup> justified the sending of British troops and material to the anti-Bolshevik armies by claiming that this was done in pursuance of a policy adopted before the Civil War in Russia started in earnest. When the Germans occupied the Ukraine Britain encouraged the organizing of patriotic Russian

<sup>1</sup> *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. I.

forces to defend the country and to keep the invaders back from "the grain of the Don, the minerals of the Urals, and the oils of the Caucasus". Although the Germans withdrew from the Ukraine at the conclusion of the Great War, a moral obligation still rested on the British Government to continue its support of these Russian armies which had been organized with British encouragement. The fact that these armies were now fighting against the Bolsheviks did not absolve Britain from fulfilling her obligation. If she withdrew her support she laid herself open to the accusation of deserting her friends the moment they ceased to be useful to her, and leaving them to have their "throats cut" by a relentless enemy. Lloyd George deprecated intervention purely with the political motive of crushing Bolshevism, but supported it as a duty which in honour the Government was bound to fulfil.

The Premier's defence of intervention was endorsed at a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet held on 31st December, 1918. Britain's attitude remained unchanged until the autumn of 1919, when it became obvious that the Russian people had no desire to see a return of the régime which the White leaders seemed determined to force on them. The depredations of the White troops aroused resentment among the civilian population, and the "terror" which they initiated was no more welcome than that of the Reds. The peasants, moreover, to whom Lenin had handed over the land—much as they disliked Communism, if they knew anything about it—had no reason to support a counter-revolutionary movement which, if it was successful, would deprive them of what they had gained and degrade them to the wretched position they had held in Imperial Russia.

Once Russia was clear of foreign troops she restored friendly relations of some sort with her neighbours in order to leave her unembarrassed to start the task of building anew the economic and industrial systems which had been destroyed. She made peace with the new Baltic states, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. These territories had been part of Imperial Russia before the war, but by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk they became "independent" under the protection of German troops which occupied the East Baltic regions. With the defeat of Germany the Baltic states proclaimed their absolute independence and, Russia not being at the Peace Conference to make any objection to this settlement, the Allied Powers recognized their claim to sovereignty. Soviet Russia was now prepared to do the same. In July, 1920, Lithuania was

recognized by the Soviet; in October, 1920, both Finland and Estonia received recognition by the Treaty of Dorpat; finally, in the same month, the Soviet admitted the independence of Latvia in the peace settlement which ended the war with Poland.

The Baltic states had to devise some *modus vivendi*. They were rivals in many ways but bound together by a fear of Poland, for the new Polish state was ambitious to become the head of this Eastern European *bloc*. Finland, apprehending danger from the aggressive policy of Poland, turned to the 'Scandinavian countries and linked herself with them. Latvia and Estonia concluded a defensive alliance in 1923, and favoured friendship with Russia to protect themselves against a Polish hegemony in the east of Europe. Lithuania also was anxious for friendship with the Soviet in preference to being under the control of her southern neighbour.

One cause of dissension between Lithuania and Poland was their rival claims to the city and district of Vilna. In July, 1920, while their war with Poland was in progress, the Bolsheviks occupied Vilna and recognized Lithuania's claim to the district. In October, 1920, the Poles agreed to a frontier which left Vilna in Lithuania's possession, but two days after the signing of this convention a semi-independent Polish force occupied the disputed area. This action was disclaimed by the Polish Government, but it made no attempt to upset the unauthorized coup, and held on to the prize. The League of Nations intervened but failed to reach any settlement in this dispute, and in March, 1923, the Conference of Ambassadors, to which Poland had addressed a plea, recognized the *de facto* occupation of Vilna by the Poles.

By this time Lithuania had put herself out of court by following the example of her neighbour and seizing without any justification the German town of Memel. This had been administered after the war by a French High Commissioner while the Allies considered what final settlement should be made regarding its status. It was proposed to create a self-governing Memel-land (on the model of Danzig) under the protection of the League of Nations. The Lithuanians, however, were determined to get control of the area, and in January, 1923, they invaded Memel, drove out the French garrison, and incorporated the territory into their own state. Again the aggressor held on to his spoils; the Allies after negotiation condoned the seizure in May, 1924.

At the conclusion of the Great War Poland was proclaimed an independent republic, and at the Peace Conference a Polish repre-

sentative pleaded for the restoration of the boundaries of Poland, such as they had been in 1772 at the time of the first partition of the state. Poland's claims were urged by another delegate at Paris, the eminent pianist Paderewski, who became the first Premier of the Republic. But the Polish delegation failed to carry its point, and the provisional frontiers to which the Allied Powers gave their approval bitterly disappointed the nationalists in the country. Marshal Pilsudski, Chief of State and Minister of War, determined to seize by force of arms what had been refused at Paris. He had the support of the French, who argued that the stronger Poland was, the weaker Germany would remain. The aim of Pilsudski's attack on Russia was to enlarge Poland's territory in the east.

With the Czechs the Poles engaged in a minor struggle early in 1919 about the possession of Teschen and the district surrounding it—a frontier strip of territory with valuable coal-fields. The dispute was settled under pressure from the Allies by a compromise which satisfied neither of the parties. The mineral area remained in Czech hands, but the town of Teschen itself (though not the railway station) was handed over to Poland.

Poland's aggressive spirit showed itself in her attack on Eastern Galicia (Polish Ukraine), where the majority of the people (of peasant stock) were Ruthenians, although there was a ruling Polish minority domiciled in the area for centuries. While the Peace Conference was in progress Eastern Galicia was the scene of fierce fighting between the Poles and the Ruthenians. Pilsudski disregarded both the opposition of the Supreme Allied Council to the course he was pursuing, and the reproaches of President Wilson. By May, 1919, the resistance of the peasant Ruthenians was broken, and Pilsudski could present a *fait accompli* to the Allies. Again aggression proved profitable. In December, 1919, the Supreme Allied Council offered to give Poland a mandate for twenty-five years over Eastern Galicia. This proposal Poland turned down, and the Allies were forced to acquiesce in her complete sovereignty over "a stretch of territory to which she had a most questionable claim on racial grounds".<sup>1</sup>

When Poland finally settled down to a period of peace and internal restoration, she had considerably increased the territory which the Supreme Allied Council had allotted to her. The eastern boundary of Poland (the "Curzon Line"), which the Allies had originally fixed, stretched from Grodno southwards to Brest-Litovsk

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34*: Gathorne-Hardy.

and then, continuing roughly the same line, to the frontier of Czechoslovakia. By her aggression against Russia and in Galicia, Poland pushed her frontier about a hundred miles or so farther east, lopping off parts of White Russia and the Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> The state which was finally consolidated included, besides the German population in the Corridor, about seven million White Russians and Ruthenians.

<sup>1</sup> Poland's extension of her frontiers in 1919-20 to include unwilling minorities in the state did not pass unchallenged by Britain. Speaking in the Commons Lloyd George said: "We deprecated any action on the part of Poland that involved the invasion of the rights of any people not of their own race. They have never taken any step of invading territories outside their own frontiers that we have not protested against." (*Hansard*, Vol. 133, 5th series, p. 689.)



## CHAPTER IV

### REPARATIONS

IT was a republican Germany to whom the task of trying to fulfil the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles fell, a republic which had been created in a mood of disillusionment and defeat, and which rested weakly on the indifference rather than the active support of the mass of the people. On 3rd November, 1918, the disintegration of Imperial Germany started. It began at Kiel with a mutiny which soon spread to other naval bases. Soldiers, sailors, and workers hoisted the Red Flag and formed Soviets on the model of those in Bolshevik Russia. On 9th November discontent swelled to a head. In Bavaria a republic was proclaimed (Kurt Eisner was the leader of the democratic revolt), and on the same day Berlin was in a turmoil. The Kaiser was persuaded to abdicate, and the Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, resigned in favour of Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the Social Democratic Party. There was sporadic fighting in the city, but little loss of life. From the steps of the Reichstag, Philip Scheidemann, a Socialist deputy, proclaimed a republic. Faith in the old leaders had been shattered for the time being, and the people were prepared to support the ex-saddler who had become Chancellor, and a democratic Government which, having the approval of the Allies, might bring them food and peace.

While Germans of moderate opinion accepted the Parliamentary democracy for which Ebert stood, the extremists in the Social Democratic Party and the Bolsheviks (Spartacists <sup>1</sup> they were called) were determined to follow the example of Lenin, and, with terror and bloodshed if necessary, bring about immediately the dictatorship of the proletariat. On 6th January, 1919, the Spartacists gained possession of some public buildings in Berlin and threw out a serious challenge to the authority of Ebert and the moderates. But Ebert had still some loyal troops of the Imperial Army at hand, and these he used to crush the rising. Moreover, the Republic had in Gustav Noske, the Minister of Defence, a man of determined will, who had

<sup>1</sup> Spartacus was the leader of a slave revolt in Ancient Rome.

no qualms about using without mercy the power that lay in his hands. When he made an appeal to the Government to deal ruthlessly with the rebels, someone shouted to him to do the task himself. Without hesitation he replied: "Very well, I shall. If a blood-thirsty butcher has to be found it may as well be me."<sup>1</sup> The Spartacists were crushed, their leaders, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, captured and shot on their way to prison by the police, and Ebert's Government had command of the situation again.

On 19th January, 1919, elections were held throughout the country for a National Assembly. This met on 6th February in Weimar to draw up a new constitution. Germany became a Parliamentary democracy, with an elected President, a Reichstag, corresponding to Britain's House of Commons, and an Upper House, the Reichsrat, representing the various states. The main legislative power rested in the Reichstag, which was elected by universal suffrage, but in a state of emergency the President, who was to be normally a figure-head, could assume dictatorial powers and rule by decree. The Provisional Constitution became law in August, 1919. The Republic was assailed from both the Right and the Left in the country. The Spartacists denounced the moderation and constitutional basis of the administration, and showed their displeasure by organizing outbreaks of serious rioting and revolutionary strikes in March and April, 1919. Kurt Eisner, the Bavarian Socialist leader, was shot dead by Spartacists in Munich on 21st February, 1919, and a Communist revolution, which broke out in Bavaria on 4th April, collapsed only after severe fighting on 1st May. The political Right in the country—the monarchists and all those to whom the tradition of Imperial Germany was something that could not be lightly cast aside—looked with disfavour on a democratic constitution (with a Socialist bias), and was prepared to destroy it if any opportunity arose.

The first President of the German Republic was Ebert, and the first Government was a coalition—Socialists, Democrats, and the Centre (Catholic) Party—under Scheidemann. The administration was shaken to its foundations by the reaction of horror and despair that spread throughout the country when the Allied terms of peace were made public. In June, 1919, Scheidemann resigned, and a new Government, with Gustav Bauer as Chancellor, was formed. It was forced to accept the peace terms on 28th June. The anger of the people at the severe and humiliating conditions of the Versailles Treaty was transferred partly from the hated Allies,

<sup>1</sup> *Peace Patrol*: Stewart Roddie.

against whom they could make no move, to the Government which had accepted these terms in the name of the German people. With this feeling prevalent throughout the country the monarchist reactionaries increased their strength considerably. Moreover, disbanded soldiers and dismissed workers, thrown out of their employment to satisfy the Allies' demand that Germany should be virtually unarmed, were keen recruits for any movement directed against the Weimar Republic.

On 13th March, 1920, there occurred what was called the *Kapp Putsch* in Berlin. The capital was occupied by some thousands of troops under General von Lüttwitz, the Ebert-Bauer Government fled to Stuttgart, and a civil servant called Wolfgang Kapp was elected Chancellor. But the rebellion had no support at all in the country. It was crushed easily by a general strike in Berlin. The rebels protested that they had the approval of the British Government for their action, but this was denied, and Kapp and the others realized that they had failed. Kapp himself fled to Sweden, the troops of von Lüttwitz withdrew from the city, and the *Putsch* was at an end. As the rearguard of the departing column reached the Brandenburg Gate, through which it was passing, the soldiers, infuriated by the jeers of the mob, opened fire, and some civilians were killed and others wounded.

It was with this republican administration, so precariously poised, that the Allied Governments had to discuss the details of how the peace conditions were to be carried out. The first great difficulty was that of reparation. The French were determined to cut their pound of flesh, or even more than a just pound, and the cry which M. Klotz reiterated in the Chamber, "Germany will pay", was echoed with deep conviction throughout the whole of France. The demand for reparation was wholeheartedly supported by the Government in power, formed after elections held in November, 1919. Called the *Bloc National*, this administration gained its strength from the reactionary elements in the country, and from big financial and industrial interests, particularly the *Comité des Forges*, an association of ironmasters. Before the peace terms were drawn up, these large-scale industrialists had hoped that France would demand from Germany not only the coal of the Saar but also the coal and iron of the Ruhr. Although the Versailles Treaty had disappointed them, they had not yet given up hope of seizing the Ruhr if Germany refused, or was unable to carry out, the terms imposed on her.

The *Bloc National* had a thoroughly sound exponent of its policy in Alexandre Millerand, who succeeded Clemenceau as Premier on 20th January, 1920. (Clemenceau was blamed by his enemies for letting Germany off too lightly at Versailles.) Millerand was determined that the Germans would not trick France of what was her due. In September, 1920, he was elected President of the Republic, but he insisted that his powers should be real and effective, and autocratically interfered in both foreign and home affairs. His first Prime Minister was M. Leygues; his second, appointed in January, 1921, M. Briand, who also acted as Foreign Secretary.

At the beginning of 1920 the European stage was well set for a mighty conflict between victor and vanquished. The German Republic, convinced that the conditions of the Versailles Treaty were unjust, had no intention of submitting without a struggle. The French were equally determined to bring the enemy to heel. In an intermediate position stood Britain, with Lloyd George as her representative. Britain was prepared to force Germany to honour her bond—even if that bond had been signed under duress—but only to a certain limit. The ruin of Germany, the complete destruction of her economic and financial life, was the last thing that British statesmen wanted. A prosperous Germany, in fact, was highly necessary if Britain's industry was to be rescued from the slough of depression in which it was weakly struggling after the short-lived post-war boom. Before the war Britain had exported more to Germany than to any other country except India, and her imports from Germany had been second only to those from the U.S.A. This conflict between France, Germany, and Britain, "The Infernal Triangle", as King-Hall called it, was one of the main causes of the unsettlement in Europe during the years 1919-23.

There began in 1920 a series of inter-Allied conferences, and others at which Germany was represented, to discuss the question of reparation. It has been argued by economists that the Allied attempt for twelve years to exact reparation payments from Germany probably wrought greater mischief in the world than any other international action after the war. The bill presented by the Allies could be paid by Germany only in goods, for all the gold that Germany had would have provided but a tiny fraction of even the most reasonable Allied claim. But the Allies would not permit Germany to dump her products within their frontiers, thereby ruining their industries and increasing unemployment. They said in effect: "Pay us what is due," and in the same breath, "but do not send us

your exports—we cannot afford in these days to receive them.” These demands were obviously contradictory, but statesmen and those they represented continued year after year to reiterate that Germany must pay, at the same time refusing, by means of tariff walls and other import restrictions, to accept the only payment that Germany could make.

As an example of the confused thinking that went on about reparations, Norman Angell described the plan suggested by an M.P. in the early days of the controversy.<sup>1</sup> This patriot favoured direct action. He proposed to send a small army to Germany, and to demand the instant loading-up of motor-trucks with the “money” due in reparations. If the demand was not complied with by a given date, two members of the German Cabinet were to be shot. This shooting might require to be done once or twice, in the M.P.’s opinion, but then Germany would yield, the trucks would be loaded with the millions of “money”, and the matter would be settled for good. That German “money” could be of use only to those living in Germany seemed outwith the knowledge of the proposer of the plan. Angell’s comment was cogent. “Your plan, therefore, amounts to this,” he wrote. “Having collected this German money in the way you suggest, you bring it to England, distribute it among the population at large, who thereupon, presumably, must emigrate to Germany and stay there drinking German beer until the reparations are exhausted.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1920 Allied statesmen were confident that reparations on a very large scale could be received from Germany. A Reparation Commission had been appointed to assess the sum that might with justice be demanded. It had been agreed that by 1st May, 1921, Germany would be informed of her indebtedness under this head. Meanwhile, deliveries in kind (coal, &c.) were made to the Allies by Germany, who also restored vast quantities of loot which she had seized in the areas occupied by her armies during the war. Ships of her mercantile marine were also surrendered, but this hardly proved of advantage to Britain. Instead of being laid up in German ports, they remained at anchor in British backwaters.

In April, 1920, a conference was held at San Remo by the Allies.

<sup>1</sup> *The Money Mystery*.

<sup>2</sup> The difficulty of paying war-debts was like that of reparations, and the same misconceptions were current. Spender quoted in *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth* the remark of an “otherwise intelligent American business man” about Britain’s war-debt to the U.S.A.: “We don’t want your goods, we don’t want your services, and we have enough gold of our own: we want your money to spend in our own way in our own country.”

Italy, represented by Signor Nitti, was already an advocate of some sort of treaty-revision; France, through Millerand, stood adamant for the bond; while Lloyd George occupied the usual intermediate position, where his genius for improvisation and compromise could get the fullest play. The only outcome of the San Remo Conference was a decision to summon German representatives to meet the Allies at Spa. Before the Spa Conference, which did not open till 5th July, 1920, the Allies had again been in consultation at Boulogne and Brussels, but their deliberations did not produce any acceptable scheme. The Spa Conference was equally futile as far as a decision about a definite sum in reparation was concerned. The Allies agreed, however, about the allocation of the moneys which they hoped to squeeze from the enemy: 52 per cent was to go to France, 22 per cent to Great Britain, 10 per cent to Italy, 8 per cent to Belgium, and the remainder to the other Allies.

In December, 1920, Allied and German experts met at Brussels and, considering the question from the point of view of Germany's capacity to pay, drew up a scheme. In the following month (January 1921) the Allies met at Paris. It was a moment when French opinion had hardened against Germany, and the proposals of the Brussels experts were completely ignored. The Allies on this occasion formulated demands to be presented to Germany. These consisted in the payment of 42 annuities, one series fixed, the other variable. The fixed series rose from a gold payment of £100,000,000 to one of £300,000,000; the other was to be met by the surrender of 12 per cent of the annual value of German exports.

These demands, which came to a figure exceeding £11,000,000,000, were submitted to the Germans, who made counter-proposals at a conference which opened on 1st March, 1921, in London. They offered something like £1,500,000,000, with, moreover, certain stipulations, including the early evacuation of the Rhineland. The Allies were annoyed. Even Lloyd George was moved to lecture the German representatives and to describe their proposals as "an offence and an exasperation".<sup>1</sup> An ultimatum was delivered: the Germans had to accept the Allies' terms, or sanctions would be employed against them. The terms were not accepted, and Marshal Foch ordered his men to march into Germany. The three towns of Ruhrort, Duisburg, and Düsseldorf were occupied, an action impossible to defend legally.<sup>1</sup>

The problem was not settled, and the Allies continued their

<sup>1</sup> *A Revision of the Treaty*: J. M. Keynes.

deliberations. On 27th April, 1921, the Reparation Commission made public its decision about the total sum to be demanded from Germany. This was approximately £6,600,000,000, a sum considerably smaller than the earlier Allied demand. It was to be paid in annuities of £100,000,000, with in addition 25 per cent of the value of German exports. The Allies demanded an immediate payment of £50,000,000, and threatened that if the terms were rejected they would occupy the Ruhr.

The Government of Germany was as unstable as it had been since the formation of the republic. Bauer had been succeeded as Chancellor by Müller in March, 1920, and after a general election in June, when the Socialists lost ground, a Coalition Government had been formed with Fehrenbach at its head. His administration endured the agony of the reparation discussions. In May, 1921, Wirth succeeded Fehrenbach, and accepted under compulsion the Allies' terms on 11th May.

The first phase of the reparation question was over. The second phase ended on 11th January, 1923, with the invasion of the Ruhr by French and Belgian troops. It was one during which Germany repeatedly asserted that she was unable to pay reparations on the scale laid down in May, 1921, while the French were equally insistent that the Germans were merely trying to trick the Allies. Britain, as before, acted the part of a mediator between her ally and her former enemy, but without outstanding success. She incurred the odium of the ally without receiving much gratitude from the enemy.

Germany was able to pay the first instalment demanded from her (£50,000,000) by a loan raised through a number of London financial houses. As a means of lightening the reparation burden, Walter Rathenau, the German Minister for Reconstruction, suggested in October, 1921, to M. Loucheur, who held the same office in the French Cabinet, that the task of restoring the devastated regions of France and Belgium should be undertaken by the Germans themselves, with German money, workmen, and materials. Loucheur approved of the plan, but it came to nothing, since the French Government wished to absorb its own unemployed men in the work, which, moreover, had already been promised to French contractors.

Meanwhile the German Government resorted to inflation in order to relieve the immediate financial strain. In the autumn of 1921 the mark began to depreciate, and in November, when the Germans made an effort to repay the loan they had received through

London, it threatened to collapse. The Germans announced that they were bound to be in default when the next payment of reparations fell due in the spring of 1922. The seriousness of the situation roused Lloyd George to action. He raised a cry for co-operation. "A united effort of the stronger powers," he said, "is necessary to remedy the paralysis of the European system." He proposed a conference at Cannes to examine Europe's difficulties in a comprehensive way. It was held on 6-13th January, 1922.

France's representative at the conference was Briand, the Prime Minister. While Briand was haunted, like the rest of his countrymen, by the spectre of a rejuvenated and rearmed Germany, he was not too obsessed merely by the need for reparations as such. Lloyd George felt that, if he could give Briand some guarantee for France's security, the reparation question would be treated by the Frenchman quite reasonably and sympathetically. A guarantee that Britain would come to France's assistance against any aggressive act on the part of Germany was the offer which Lloyd George was prepared to make. Briand was not entirely satisfied; he wished this promise to be strengthened by a definite military convention. The matter was under discussion at Cannes and a formula to satisfy both parties might have been devised, but negotiations were broken off, for Briand was recalled to Paris. His recall was the outcome of a game of golf.

Briand was already suspect in Paris; he was considered too susceptible to the wiles of the British Premier. It was felt that at the Disarmament Conference at Washington, from which he had just returned, the French Premier had been outwitted by his more nimble adversary, and his critics at home were keenly on the look-out for any sign of submission on his part to one of whom they were deeply suspicious. Lloyd George persuaded Briand to engage in a game of golf, a game which was the chosen pastime of the British Premier, but one in which Briand was a complete novice. Press photographers were at hand, and pictures promptly appeared in the Paris newspapers showing a humble Briand carefully following the instructions of his skilful mentor.

"And irrationally, but instantly, Paris, France generally, rebelled. Lloyd George was the enemy. Briand had but yesterday been the victim of the present guest of Cannes. French prestige and popularity in America had been destroyed by the skill and chicane of the British statesman who was now leading Briand, not down the primrose path, perhaps, but certainly across the slippery greens.



"Without warning there came from Paris alarming messages. A split in the French Cabinet had developed. . . . Briand abandoned the sunny trees and hastened to Paris. By a brief Cabinet meeting he seemed to have succeeded in restoring unity. In a speech in the Chamber he apparently reasserted his mastery of the tumultuous body.

"But in fact it was too late. Emerging from the session in which his eloquence appeared irresistible, Briand suddenly resigned."<sup>1</sup>

Millerand, President of the Republic, summoned Poincaré to take up the reins of office. The game of golf had done its work too well, and Lloyd George's plan to restore amity between Britain and her French ally was frustrated. Poincaré was determined to have a military convention along with a British guarantee to France, and, as the British Government was not prepared to grant this, the proposal fell to the ground.

Poincaré was a leader in whom reactionary France could put implicit trust. There was no suspicion about his patriotism, no fear of his succumbing to a sentimental weakness for the Boches. He was an implacable enemy, and the true creator, according to Lloyd George, of the Germany which some years later was to arise fully armed. During his second term of office as Prime Minister (he had been in power for a brief spell in 1912-13 before being elected President) he inspired an invasion of the Ruhr in search of reparations, and was bitterly disappointed when, having picked Germany's purse from her pocket, he found it singularly empty and not bulging with the gold which was to restore France's fortune. The occupation of the Ruhr was carried out to force Germany to fulfil, if it was possible, her commitments, and at the same time to give the *Comité des Forges* a firm hold on German industry. The French standpoint was made plain in a report drawn up in 1922 at the request of Poincaré by M. Dariac, President of the Finance Committee of the French Chamber. Dariac stated that with the occupation of the Ruhr France could "utterly disorganize" German industry. The report went on:

"We cannot demand that Germany shall pay enormous sums for 35 years, and on the other hand we are afraid of seeing her industries develop in the proportion which would permit her to assure the payment of the debts which she has acknowledged. . . . The moment that we set foot on the right bank of the Rhine and control 45,000,000 tons of ore per annum, we shall play a decisive rôle in German heavy industry and can demand control of its production."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *How Britain made Peace without America*: Frank Symonds. (Quoted by Spender in *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth*.)

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Is It Peace?* by Graham Hutton.

In 1922, before Poincaré's plan to invade the Ruhr had been finally decided upon, international discussions continued. An abortive economic conference was held at Genoa in April-May, with Russia represented. Poincaré was determined to make this meeting a failure; he himself did not attend, and his delegates were not at all helpful or compromising in their suggestions. Negotiations with Russia broke down because the Soviet refused to accept the obligation of pre-Revolutionary Russia's debts to foreign countries, and replied to this demand by claiming compensation for the damage wrought by the Allies in the course of the Civil War. The only outcome of the conference was a private treaty concluded between the two pariahs, Germany and Russia, at Rapallo. It was an innocuous document, providing merely for the cancellation of war claims between the two states and agreeing to the resumption of normal peace relations. But to the Allies, and particularly to the French, it seemed a piece of subtle trickery that might threaten the Versailles settlement and place Germany more speedily on the road that would lead eventually to Paris for the third time within a couple of generations.

A partial moratorium conceded to Germany in the spring of 1922 eased her financial difficulties for a time, but in the autumn matters were as bad as before. An Allied Conference was held in London in August to consider the question of a total moratorium, but Poincaré sabotaged it by insisting on "protective guarantees" from Germany before he would consent to lighten the reparation burden. The guarantee he had in mind was the seizure by the Allies (i.e. the French) of the Ruhr mines.

Matters came to a head on 26th December, 1922, when M. Barthou, the French representative on the Reparation Commission, moved for an official notification of Germany's default in the delivery of agreed supplies of timber to France. Actually there was a technical default of a trifling nature, but this was made use of by the French merely for the purpose of giving a pseudo-legal basis to their next move against the enemy. Sir John Bradbury exposed the true implication of M. Barthou's proposal. "This trumpery accusation," he said, "was only before the Commission at the moment as a preparation for an offensive in other fields. Since . . . Troy fell to the stratagem of the wooden horse, history recorded no similar use of timber."<sup>1</sup> The French won their point, however, being supported by the Belgian and Italian representatives on the Commission.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34*, by Gathorne-Hardy.

Germany's default was duly recorded, and Poincaré was now ready to carry out his next move. The breach between the British and French points of view became apparent at a conference in Paris on 2nd January, 1923. A week later the notification of a further default on Germany's part, this time in the delivery of coal, prompted Poincaré to take the decisive step to which all his diplomacy had been directed. On 11th January French and Belgian troops crossed the German frontier in order to occupy the Ruhr basin, and to seize reparations on the spot before the treacherous enemy had time to remove their wealth from the just grasp of their creditors. A day before the occupation took place, the American army was recalled from the Rhine.

The occupation of the Ruhr ("Hats off to M. Poincaré!" shouted the Harmsworth Press at the time), besides being a sanction against which a sound legal case might be adduced, was an act which brought disastrous consequences both to Germany and to France, and intensified the hatred between the two enemies. Cuno had succeeded Fehrenbach as Chancellor of Germany in November, 1922, and the policy which he followed was one of passive resistance to the invader. All reparation deliveries to France and Belgium were suspended, and the German Government encouraged the workers in the occupied areas to refuse to co-operate with the enemy. The French were forced therefore to replace German officials by their own men, and to undertake the difficult task of running, with an inexperienced personnel, extraordinarily intricate economic, industrial, and transport systems; all the time faced with the passive and often the active resistance of the population. Ten million men in the Ruhr were idle, living on strike pay from Berlin. Thousands of officials, including the directors of Krupps, were thrown into prison, thousands of others deported at a few hours' notice. The French, moreover, instigated a separatist movement in the area they occupied. A Rhineland republic was proclaimed—so for a brief time was the plan passionately advocated by France realized—but it was a republic with no popular backing and owed its origin to French arms and to agitators in the pay of the French. In February, 1924, when France's support was withdrawn, the separatist movement immediately collapsed.

The Ruhr occupation was not carried on without casualties. "French sources admit a loss of 20 killed and 68 wounded on the side of the Allies, and of 76 killed and 92 wounded on that of their opponents, while German measures in enforcement of the policy

of passive resistance involved a casualty list of 300 dead and more than 2000 injured.”<sup>1</sup> More serious was the terrific strain on the finances of both Germany and France. The value of the franc fell by a quarter. In Germany the currency collapsed completely, and in the autumn of 1924 the English pound was valued in terms of millions of marks. Tens of thousands of thrifty Germans were ruined by the depreciation of the mark; their savings vanished in a trice into thin air. In *Peace Patrol* Stewart Roddie described the fantastic situation in Germany during this period of inflation. His servant, a Scotsman, invariably estimated income in terms of the pre-war value of the mark, and expenditure at the rate of the moment. His accounting at the end of the week was on these lines:

“Ye gave me five pounds on Monday. I paid twenty-two thousand pounds for shoe polish and a clo’es brush; seventeen thousand five hundred pounds for apricot jam—it’s up this week—and a wee jar at that; then there’s the laundry—extra sheets and pillow-cases for your visitor—fifty-three thousand pounds seven and six; credit balance—two and two.”

In September, 1923, the Germans could hold out no longer, and submitted, calling off their policy of passive resistance. There was opposition in Bavaria to this surrender, but the Reich Government easily brought the rebels to heel. By this time saner counsels were also being heard in France. It was plain even to Poincaré that the occupation of the Ruhr was proving a serious liability to France, and that to continue fighting the vanquished enemy would not ultimately benefit his country. Stresemann, the German Chancellor—he succeeded Cuno in August, 1923—was a supporter of a policy advocated by Walter Rathenau (this statesman of European outlook was assassinated in June, 1922), namely that of “fulfilment”: a sincere attempt to meet the claims of the Allies in order to ensure peace and to give Germany an opportunity to recover. It was Stresemann who ended passive resistance in the Ruhr, and undertook to restore the currency of the country on a stable basis. This was the task of Dr. Schacht, the Finance Minister. A new coin, the Rentenmark, was introduced; a billion of the old marks were equal to one Rentenmark. Schacht’s policy relieved Germany at one swoop of her internal debts, but ruined millions of people. It convinced the Allies of Stresemann’s determination to act fairly towards them, and

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs*:

made easy a reasonable approach to the reparation question. The German Government was reconstructed in November, 1924; Wilhelm Marx became Chancellor, and Stresemann went to the Foreign Office.

At the beginning of 1924 the U.S.A., in answer to an appeal from Stanley Baldwin, Britain's Prime Minister, agreed to take part in a conference to examine Germany's capacity to pay reparations. This conference, which opened in Paris in January, 1924, was attended not by politicians but by business and financial experts from different countries, with an American banker, Charles G. Dawes, as president. By April it had a plan of new reparation payments ready for submission to the Allies and Germany. In the following month a change of Government took place in France with the resignation of Poincaré and the break-up of the *Bloc National*—shipwrecked on the rocks of the Ruhr invasion. A new coalition, called the *Cartel des Gauches*, came into power, with Edouard Herriot as its first Prime Minister. The new administration looked for support not to the great industrialists but to the moderate elements in France, the small *rentier* and the peasant proprietor. It had none of the intransigent spirit that characterized the *Bloc National*, and was prepared to treat Germany reasonably. The British Government had by now become a Labour one, with Ramsay MacDonald at its head, and it also was anxious to reach an amicable settlement about reparations.

The Dawes Plan was discussed at a conference of the Allies and Germany, and was finally adopted by the Governments concerned in the London Agreement of 30th August, 1924. Under the plan Germany still shouldered a great burden. She bound herself to pay annuities rising from £50,000,000 in the first year to a standard payment of £125,000,000 in 1929 and subsequent years. This money was to be raised from railway bonds, industrial debentures, a transport tax, &c. The Dawes Committee emphasized that it was necessary for Germany to have complete control of all her resources (this referred particularly to the Ruhr) if she was to fulfil the conditions imposed on her. Moreover, in order to revive Germany's industry an immediate foreign loan of £40,000,000 was necessary. This loan—the first of a series—was floated with success in October, 1924.

The Dawes Plan was in the nature of a temporary settlement of the reparation problem. It had many disadvantages, but it achieved its main purpose: it gave Germany immediate relief and brought

the reparation question from a realm of fantastic speculation to the plane of reality. The Ruhr was evacuated, and in 1925 Europe seemed for the time being to have settled down. The Great War was finally at an end.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SECURITY OF FRANCE

IN the drafting of the Treaty of Versailles two of the vital problems which the Allied Powers had had in mind were: how to give a feeling of security to the war-weary nations of Europe, and how to bring about at least some measure of general disarmament. The League of Nations was devised to solve these problems. Its purpose was "to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security"; and in another Article of the Covenant it was emphasized that "the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety". Had the Victor Powers, instead of giving merely lip-service to these principles, acted boldly in conformity with them, the temper of Europe in the years following the Great War would have been very different from what it was. But the nations had not reached the point of being willing to sacrifice their sovereign rights on the altar of a rather vague international ideal of justice and co-operation. There were sixty-six national states in the world, each still jealous of its privileges, each determined to judge its own case in any matter that seemed to affect vitally its own interests, and each suspicious of interference in its national policy by a group of alien powers, even when these acted with the authority of a properly constituted League. Europe was willing to subscribe to the belief that ahead there might lie peace and security based on a system of wholehearted co-operation; but there was so much in the way of hatred and injustice and fear in the Europe moulded at Versailles, that each nation hesitated to sacrifice any of its sovereign rights lest some enemy might gain thereby an overwhelming advantage.

In the west of Europe the question of security was most vital to France, and in the east to the succession states (Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia), and to those (Greece and Rumania) which had gained territory at the expense of the defeated powers. These states, the anti-revisionist group, were determined to resist any attempt to deprive them of the spoils of war; their aim was to keep

their enemies as helpless as possible, for then only could they feel themselves in some measure safe. Germany and the other defeated powers, while they lay stunned for the moment under the blows of both war and peace, were bound in time to recover their strength. Against this eventuality France and other of the victors were eager to take precautions.

At the Paris Conference Clemenceau had proposed that a buffer Rhineland state should be constituted under French control. With her frontier virtually on the Rhine, France would then be in a strong position to defy Germany. But the other Allied statesmen would not yield to Clemenceau's demand. The French Premier unwillingly gave in, and by way of compensation he got the signature of both Lloyd George and Wilson to Treaties of Mutual Guarantee. In addition, the French desire for security was partly satisfied by the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, including the demilitarization of the Rhineland zone and the Allied occupation of German territory. The Treaty of Mutual Guarantee which Lloyd George signed on behalf of Britain provided for immediate help to France if she suffered unprovoked aggression from Germany. This treaty was ratified by the British Parliament. A similar treaty, however, signed by President Wilson, was rejected by the American Senate. The British promise had been conditional on the ratification of both treaties, so that, when the Senate repudiated what Wilson had done, the British guarantee also lapsed. The French felt with some justice that they had been tricked.

About the League of Nations, moreover, the French were sceptical. They wished the League to be equipped with an international army to resist an aggressor, but this proposal, made to Wilson by Léon Bourgeois and later by M. Briand at Geneva, was turned down. The refusal of the U.S.A. to join the League increased the pessimism of the French, and within a year or two after the war that was to end war French statesmen were eagerly insuring their country in as many and as comprehensive ways as possible against the outbreak of a retaliatory war against her. In September, 1920, France made a military alliance with Belgium, and in February, 1921, concluded a treaty with Poland. In 1923-4 she lent large sums to Poland and equipped her eastern ally with arms. After the conclusion of peace France also supplied the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia) with war materials, and, although there was no formal alliance made till later between France and these eastern states, common interest in maintaining the Treaty of



Versailles kept them closely together. In 1922 Britain offered to France virtually the same guarantee as had been made in Paris by Lloyd George. It was to Briand at a conference at Cannes that this offer was made, but before negotiations could be completed Briand fell and was replaced by the fire-eating Poincaré. The negotiations with him broke down, and the French remained still unsatisfied and fearful of the future.

France complained of the indifference of both Britain and the U.S.A. to the danger which threatened her when Germany's strength returned. The reasons for Britain's apathy were lack of imagination and distrust of the leaders of the heavy industries in France.<sup>1</sup> The *Comité des Forges*—the big metallurgical and armaments trust—had a powerful influence in the *Bloc National*, the Government that ruled France in 1919–24. The ambition of the *Comité* to gain control of the valuable coke of the Ruhr—and to gain control of it by occupying the territory—was not one that encouraged sympathetic feelings towards France among British statesmen and industrialists. So far from wishing to disorganize German industry, Britain looked to an industrial revival in Germany to relieve the trade slump from which she herself was suffering. Nevertheless, it was felt in Britain that some pledge ought to be given to her ally, particularly when, after the invasion of the Ruhr, Poincaré and the *Bloc National* were replaced in 1924 by a more liberal administration, the *Cartel des Gauches*.

On the question of pacts that would give security there were two divergent standpoints. The French, and a party in Britain whose spokesman was Lord Robert Cecil, insisted that pacts should be of a general character, and that if individual states made defensive alliances the real virtue of the League of Nations principle was destroyed, and Europe was back in the position of the dangerous pre-war groupings. These "universalists" were opposed by "regionalists", who considered that it was almost impossible to get general approval for a universal pact, whereas it was possible and profitable to conclude, with satisfactory safeguards, regional alliances. An attempt to combine the "universal" and "regional" points of view was made in a Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance, drawn up in 1923 by Lord Robert Cecil and Colonel Requin. While all signatories to the pact were under an obligation to help any member against an aggressor, actual military assistance was to be expected only from those states which were situated in the continent

<sup>1</sup> *The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.

where the act of aggression took place. Local alliances in these circumstances were permitted by the pact. The Treaty of Mutual Assistance was rejected by Britain and her Dominions, mainly because of the extraordinarily large obligations which the British Empire might be forced to undertake, since Britain's interests are not regional in any sense but worldwide.

In 1924 Herriot, Prime Minister of France, produced a plan—the Geneva Protocol—to supplement the League and to give definite security to all European states. It was necessary to do something, for the League was already losing the confidence of many of its members. In particular, the “sanctions” clauses, which had been accepted in the first flush of victory, seemed dangerous weapons when a year or two's cool deliberation had disclosed all their implications. The danger that a country might be forced willy-nilly into war against an aggressor under Article 16 of the Covenant (the main “sanctions” Article) made many nations, including Britain and her Dominions, pause. The League Assembly adopted various resolutions which weakened Article 16, and a French critic had justice in complaining that while the strength of this Article was ruined nothing was put in its place.

The Geneva Protocol was intended, therefore, to balance what might turn out to be a weakness of the League when an act of aggression took place. It gave a clear-cut definition of aggression (the main test was the answer to the question: “Are you willing to arbitrate?”), and “it applied the machinery of arbitration to all disputes except those arising out of matters solely within the domestic jurisdiction of one of the parties”.<sup>1</sup> Against an aggressor the Protocol provided for the application by European states of the same sanctions (without any qualification) as were mentioned in Article 16 of the Covenant.

While the details of the Geneva Protocol were being discussed, a Labour Government was in power in Britain, and Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, took an active part in furthering Herriot's attempt to link peace-loving states together against an aggressor. The Labour Government was defeated in November, 1924, and a Conservative administration took its place. By this time the Protocol had been studied carefully by the British Foreign Office, and had been circulated among the Dominions. Various objections to it were brought forward, particularly by Dominion statesmen. They were averse to committing themselves to the

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34*: Gathorne-Hardy.  
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imposition of sanctions on countries far from them, and against peoples with whom they had little contact, and in whom they had no interest. As in the U.S.A., the advantage of isolation, or at least isolation from political entanglements with European states, was rapidly gaining many converts in Britain's Dominions. In a speech delivered at a meeting of the League Council on 12th March, 1925, Austen Chamberlain, Britain's Foreign Minister, confessed that there was a general dislike of the Protocol both in Britain and in her Dominions, and this avowal made its rejection inevitable. To the Commons about a fortnight later Chamberlain explained more fully the standpoint of the Government. He said that, while Britain's greatest wars had been fought to prevent one military power from dominating Europe, and at the same time dominating the coasts of the Channel and the ports of the Low Countries—an issue which affected Britain's security—"our obligations could not be extended in respect to every frontier. But we thought that what we could not do in every sphere we might properly . . . advise our people to undertake in that sphere with which we were most closely connected."<sup>1</sup> The last statement expressed Britain's readiness to undertake a limited guarantee to preserve peace in Western Europe. The rejection of the Geneva Protocol marked the change of attitude towards collective security which had occurred in many countries in five years. The sanctions which the Protocol imposed were identical with those accepted under the Covenant in 1919. In 1924 many countries refused to bind themselves to carry out these sanctions against an enemy to peace.

After the rejection of the Geneva Protocol France still insisted that "peace was indivisible" (the phrase used later by Litvinov, Russia's Foreign Commissar), and that danger might threaten her from an aggressive act by Germany in Eastern Europe as well as by a direct attack across the Rhine. But Britain, following her traditional policy, was prepared to shoulder only a limited responsibility for France and for the peace of Europe. The pacts which she eventually sponsored returned to the regional system. A proposal, made by Germany in 1922 and repeated in 1923, to enter into an agreement with France to preserve the *status quo* in Western Europe was now followed up by the British Foreign Office. Discussions were initiated with France and Germany in the early months of 1925. These were protracted. Difficulties arose about Germany's entry into the League of Nations, an essential part of the scheme. Briand,

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*: Vol. 182, 5th Series, p. 320.

the French Foreign Minister, wished this to be unconditional, whereas Germany stipulated, at first, for the complete evacuation both of the Ruhr and of the first Rhineland zone. Also, Article 16 of the Covenant was not one that Germany was prepared to accept without qualification. Eventually difficulties were smoothed away, and at a conference held at Locarno a group of international pacts was unanimously approved on 15th October. These were formally signed in London on 1st December, 1925.

The main treaty, called the Rhineland Pact, was one of mutual guarantee of the Belgian-German-French frontiers by Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Italy. The obligation which Britain shouldered was this: she promised to go to the assistance of Germany, Belgium, or France if one of these countries was attacked, without reason, by either (or both) of the others. The other pacts were more restricted in their scope. Germany, while she accepted her loss of territory in Western Europe, refused to consider as final the Versailles settlement in the east of Europe. She pledged herself, however, by treaties with both Poland and Czechoslovakia, to rely upon arbitration for the remedying of her frontier grievances. With Belgium and France she concluded similar arbitration conventions. Finally, France insured herself still further against the enemy of whom she had an inveterate distrust by signing treaties of mutual assistance, in the event of aggression by Germany, with Poland and Czechoslovakia.

The Locarno Settlement was hailed as a triumph throughout Europe generally, and did much to relieve tension and to restore some feeling of security. Actually it was rather a reckless obligation which Britain undertook, with, moreover, no reciprocal guarantees if she was attacked. Whether public opinion in Britain would support the Government if the need arose to fulfil the obligation was a question to which no definite answer could be made. But the British people probably believed that the threat of an attack by Britain on an aggressor would be sufficient to prevent an actual outbreak of war. "At the time of its adoption, at any rate," wrote Gathorne-Hardy, "the Locarno Pact was a most effective and formidable looking scarecrow, which went far to justify the opinion of its creator, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, that its erection marked 'the real dividing line between the years of war and the years of peace'." <sup>1</sup> Briand's comment was: "In the light of these treaties we are Europeans only."

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34.*

## CHAPTER VI

### EUROPEAN LULL

**D**URING the years 1919-23 Germany used all the means in her power to resist the demands made on her by the Treaty of Versailles. This period of resistance came to an end in August, 1923, when Gustav Stresemann, a disciple of the policy of fulfilment, became Chancellor. Stresemann acknowledged the Versailles Treaty and was prepared to carry out its provisions. This meant also that Germany was willing to collaborate with the Allied Powers in order to restore stability to Europe. She accepted the Dawes Plan of reparation payments, and went still further in a policy of conciliation by signing the Locarno Treaties and joining the League of Nations.

After 1923 the mood of France also changed. The Pyrrhic victory of the Ruhr brought about the fall of Poincaré and the *Bloc National* in May, 1924. The *Cartel des Gauches*, which took its place, was supported by the middle classes in France, whose chief desire was for peace and an opportunity to settle down without the fear of any reckless adventure plunging France and Europe again into chaos. The *Cartel* proved its genuine wish for peace in the Dawes Plan, the evacuation of the Ruhr, and the Locarno settlement. Moreover, Herriot, the first leader of the new Government, gave official recognition to Russia, another step in the policy of removing tension and discord in Europe.

Before Herriot formed his administration in 1924 he successfully demanded the resignation of Millerand from the Presidency, since Millerand had been behind the *Bloc National* and its disastrous policy. Gaston Doumergue became President and held this position till 1931.

In the field of domestic affairs the *Cartel des Gauches* found itself in difficulties. Since the conclusion of the Great War the structure of French finance had rocked insecurely on the basis of unbalanced Budgets. Finance ministers had drawn up the nation's balance-sheet on the assumption that large reparation payments would flow from

Germany; these had not been forthcoming. (Before she was paid any money by Germany France had expended 20 million francs in reconstructing the devastated areas in the country.) In April, 1925, Herriot's Cabinet fell owing to the trouble which arose out of an inflationary policy that the Government adopted in the early months of the year. Herriot's successor was M. Painlevé, who gave way in November, 1925, to Briand. Loucheur, the Finance Minister in the new administration, could think of no means of easing the financial situation save by continuing a policy of inflation. This led to his dismissal. The only alternative to inflation was for the Government to increase taxation, and therein lay the crux of the difficulty. Frenchmen dislike taxation even more than do the people of other countries (there was no income tax in France until 1917), and every administration took its life in its hands when it proposed any radical measures of this kind. Nevertheless, in 1926, with the franc falling seriously—in July the pound sterling was worth 250 francs—something drastic had to be done. The *Cartel* leaders imposed additional taxes, not sufficient actually to balance the Budget, but enough to bring about the fall of the Government. The President summoned Poincaré to take office. He agreed, and in July, 1926, formed a new coalition called the *Union Nationale*.

Poincaré's ministry was composed of men drawn from both the *Bloc National* and the *Cartel des Gauches*. By so widening the basis of his administration he hoped to retain the support of most of his countrymen. To prove that he did not intend to pursue an entirely reactionary policy in foreign affairs, Poincaré appointed Briand to the Foreign Office. The Radicals were satisfied by the inclusion of Herriot. On the other hand, Tardieu, a die-hard who still insisted that the terms of the Versailles Treaty were too lenient, became Minister of Public Works, an appointment that balanced the Left element in the Cabinet.

Poincaré was his own Finance Minister, and his first task was to balance the Budget. The French taxpayer had perforce to acquiesce in some sacrifices: the income tax was raised, indirect taxation increased, and economies in the civil service accepted. For the first time in sixteen years the French Budget was balanced. The value of the franc, moreover, was raised till it stood at 124 to the pound sterling. The French *rentier* realized by this time that it was better to sacrifice a part of his income in taxation than to lose all he had by the complete collapse of the franc. What could happen if an inflationary policy got completely out of hand had been shown

in Germany in 1923. In June, 1928, Poincaré linked the franc to gold at the value of 124 to the pound sterling. The reduction of the franc to a fifth of its pre-war value hit the *rentiers* hard, for they found the income from their investments correspondingly reduced. To the industrialist, on the other hand, the cheap franc was an asset; in foreign countries he could undersell his trade competitors.

Up to 1926 French ministers had also difficulties to contend with in Alsace-Lorraine. The Germans, after seizing this territory in 1871, ruled the inhabitants with some consideration for their racial and religious feelings. The provinces received a measure of independence, and the German Government concluded a Concordat with the Papacy to maintain the Catholic clergy at the State's expense and to allow religious teaching in schools. When Alsace-Lorraine was restored to France in 1919, the French Government adopted an administrative policy very different from that of the Germans. The *Bloc National* favoured a completely centralized authority in the state, and, abolishing the measure of local autonomy which Alsace-Lorraine had enjoyed under German rule, administered the provinces through officials sent from Paris. French Governments, moreover, were anti-clerical in spirit, and the *Cartel des Gauches* attempted to break the Concordat with the Pope. The population of Alsace-Lorraine was roused to protest against the anti-clericalism of their rulers, and eventually Herriot had to agree to a compromise. Religious instruction was no longer allowed in State schools, but children had to be given the opportunity of receiving such instruction in Church schools. When Poincaré was in office, a demand for local autonomy grew strong in Alsace-Lorraine. The Prime Minister tried to suppress this movement, but he also had to compromise; he released agitators who had been arrested and allowed autonomist propaganda to continue.

During the years 1924-29 Germany seemed to be in a sound state of convalescence, with her industry growing more active every day. The most powerful minister was Stresemann, who was at the Foreign Office, and his doctrine of satisfying the Allies by attempting to fulfil the Versailles Treaty was that pursued by the Government. Stresemann had two foreign colleagues with whom he could work in sympathy, Briand in France and Austen Chamberlain in Britain. The days of the French swashbuckler receded in the distance, and an era of reasonable discussion of difficulties, of compromise, of the pre-war diplomatic conference seemed to have dawned.

To all appearances Germany was, economically, once more on

her feet. In 1924 she borrowed £45,000,000 (it came mostly from the U.S.A.) in order to set in motion the wheels of industry, and at the same time accepted the Dawes Scheme of reparation payments. This was the first of a series of loans which foreign investors eagerly made to a revived Germany. State and municipal bodies had no difficulty in getting what they needed in foreign credits. During the five years of the Dawes Plan (1924-9) Germany received £900,000,000 in foreign loans, and returned £500,000,000 in reparation payments.<sup>1</sup> The U.S.A. was the chief source from which this wealth flowed, for American financiers had a vision of Germany, with her 60,000,000 industrious workers, in complete economic dependence upon them. But loans came also from Britain and France, "the lenders displaying the serene impartiality of international Capitalists where rates of interest were high and large profits seemed to be within reach".<sup>2</sup> With these loans Germany was able to organize her industry on the most up-to-date lines. By 1926 her industrial output was only 5½ per cent below that of the pre-war years.<sup>3</sup> Not only did new factories spring up in Germany, but there was sufficient capital for the construction of public buildings of all kinds—schools, hospitals, museums, town-halls. Germany entered the competition for the trans-Atlantic luxury tourist traffic, and challenged her rivals with the *Bremen* and the *Europa*. "The finest poor-house in the world", is quoted by Mowrer<sup>4</sup> to describe the Germany of this period.

But this economic prosperity rested on the insecure foundation of foreign credits. Equally insecure during these years were the political foundations of the German Republic. The Republic, born in defeat, had many hostile forces actively working against it in the country. The average German felt that there was nothing in the pure reason of the republican doctrine to satisfy him for the loss of the burning spirit which had animated pre-war Germany. Honour, duty, loyalty, discipline—the pillars upon which had rested the glory of the Imperial Reich—seemed to have crumbled to dust. In place of these there was absolute freedom, both political and social. Men could say what they liked, for there was no censorship; they could mould their lives in whatever pattern they willed, and as long as their actions harmed no one else the State did not interfere. But the privileges of liberty need to be guarded against enemies both

<sup>1</sup> *International Affairs*: Carr.

<sup>2</sup> *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth*: Spender.

<sup>3</sup> *The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.    <sup>4</sup> *Germany Puts the Clock Back*.



of the Right and the Left. While there are some who would kill liberty by repression, there are others who destroy liberty in licence; they disregard the limits which the free man must himself impose on his own conduct. In the days of the German Republic some canker of degeneration seemed to eat into the spirit of the people. It came to light in numerous cases of corruption among State and municipal officials, even Erzberger, leader of the Catholic Centre Party and a signatory of the Versailles Treaty, not escaping this stigma. Critics of the Republic again pointed, as showing the moral decadence of the people, to the unrestricted sale of "immoral" literature, and to the evil atmosphere of the night-life of Berlin and other large cities. Jewish influence in the state was blamed for corrupt transactions that were unearthed and for immoral practices that were tolerated.

The German Republic lasted but fourteen years, and while many causes contributed to its downfall (including the economic crisis of 1929-31 and the Treaty of Versailles), not the least was the failure of the Republican leaders to change the spirit of the country from indifferent acquiescence in the Weimar Constitution to enthusiastic support of it. This could have been done. Instead, the Republicans gave their detractors every opportunity to undermine the new state. The old Prussian spirit remained untouched and unchecked in the army, in branches of the civil service, in schools, and in universities. When the Reichswehr was reconstructed in 1919, by permission of Ebert's Government, for the purpose of maintaining public order, it became not the servant but the master of the administration. Particularly dangerous to the Republic was the propaganda carried out against it by those in authority over the youth of Germany. By the end of the 'twenties, "in the majority of the intermediate schools and the *Volksschulen* in the country and the smaller towns, the students and the faculty were overwhelmingly nationalist and socially reactionary".<sup>1</sup> The Republic gave liberty of speech to its opponents, and they did not hesitate to say exactly what they thought of the leaders of the state. They could libel with impunity, for the nationalist judges did not allow themselves to be guided by rules of law and evidence but by political prejudice. The utterer of a libel on the Chancellor, Wilhelm Marx, accusing him of having been bribed by Britain to sign the London Agreement of 1924, was condemned to an insignificant penalty. When Ebert was President of the Reich, a judge in Magdeburg refused in 1924 to condemn some

<sup>1</sup> *Germany Puts the Clock Back: Mowrer.*

persons who declared that he had committed treason in January, 1918.<sup>1</sup> Powerful enemies of the Republic were living in the glories of the past, and considered the new régime as but a temporary interruption of the disciplined Prussian spirit of the real Germany. In these circumstances it was inevitable that distrust of the Republic should spread throughout the country.

The Stresemann policy of fulfilling the terms of the Versailles Treaty also provoked reaction. By this time the theory that Germany's defeat had been the result of a "stab in the back", delivered by traitors in the Government in 1918, was gaining many adherents. It was a theory popular with the army, who shifted the disgrace of Germany's surrender from their own shoulders to those of the civilians. Among the civilians the parties of the Right blamed the Jewish, Socialist, and Republican groups for the disaster of 1918. These nationalists, protesting therefore that they had been tricked into defeat, put every obstacle they could in the way of fulfilling the Allies' demands. The Allied Military Disarmament Commission, for example, which was at work in Germany from 1919 to 1925, had all sorts of difficulties to contend with, and the programme of disarmament, which in normal conditions could have been carried out in eighteen months, took a number of years.<sup>2</sup> The large industrialists, with their leader Hugo Stinnes, were among the keenest of the opponents of the policy of fulfilment. They tolerated the Republic, however, in the halcyon days of the Dawes Period when their pockets bulged with American loans.

The two organized parties most hostile to the Weimar Republic were the Nationalists and the National Socialists. The Nationalists were in the direct line of the Prussian Conservatives. Their party was monarchist in sympathy, and it had the backing of the big estate owners and the large-scale industrialists. It maintained a private army—the *Stahlhelm* (Steel Helmet)—half a million or so veteran soldiers. The National Socialists, whose leader was an ex-corporal of the army, Adolf Hitler, had much in common with the purely Nationalist Party, but they were even more insistent on the need for repudiating the Treaty of Versailles. Anti-Semitism and Socialist measures to appeal to the working classes also appeared on the programme of Hitler's party. The National Socialists had their private army of Storm Troopers, about 400,000 by the beginning of the 'thirties. Antagonistic also to the Republican Government was a growing body of Communists. It was to crush the Communists

<sup>1</sup> *Germany Puts the Clock Back*: Mowrer.

<sup>2</sup> *Peace Patrol*: Stewart Roddie.

that the Socialist Chancellor Ebert had been forced in 1918 to call the old army to his assistance. The Communists were working to wreck the Weimar Constitution as ardently as were the parties of the Right, although from a very different motive.

Even when the Republican Government did its work most thoroughly it created difficulties for itself. It rationalized and mechanized the new industry of Germany so efficiently that many men were thrown out of work. Young people found it difficult to find an opening in trade or to enter a profession, and these restless adolescents, along with the older unemployed workers, swelled the ranks of Hitler's Storm Troops; for their leader promised them salvation. Yet the Republican Government seemed firmly fixed in power in 1928, despite the disintegrating influences at work in Germany. Trade and industry were flourishing, and no one suspected in 1928 that the stream of gold flowing from the shores of America to Europe would suddenly dry up.

At the beginning of 1929 a committee, under the direction of Owen D. Young, an American banker, sat to consider again the question of reparations, and to devise a new scheme of payments. There were disadvantages in the Dawes Plan; the total amount of Germany's indebtedness had not been fixed, and the Germans objected to the Allied Control of their internal economy permitted under the scheme. The Young Committee drew up a new plan which was accepted by both Germany and the Allies. By this "complete and final solution of the reparation problem" Germany bound herself to make an annual payment for 37 years of about £100,000,000, this to be followed by 22 smaller annuities, varying between 80 and 85 million pounds. Germany had the right in a time of financial difficulty to postpone for at most two years the transfer into foreign currency of about two-thirds of an annuity due. The money was to come from the revenue of the railways and from taxation, and the Allied supervision of Germany's internal affairs was discontinued. To facilitate the transfer of large sums of money from Germany to the Allies a Bank for International Settlements was set up, a useful clearing-house for international banking business of all kinds.

The Young Scheme made some modification in the ratio (agreed to at Spa in 1920) which governed the division among the Allies of the money received from Germany. The change was to Britain's disadvantage, but Philip Snowden, Chancellor of the Exchequer in the second Labour Government (1929-31), firmly stood up for Britain's rights at a conference held at the Hague in August, 1929,

and gained the greater part of his claim, mainly at the expense of Germany. At a second Hague Conference in January, 1930, agreements were signed by the powers accepting the Young Plan, which was to come into force on 17th May, 1930. The reparation problem seemed liquidated, and another was also settled in the following month. Negotiations for evacuating the Rhineland, conducted by Stresemann, Briand, and Henderson (Foreign Minister in the British Labour Government), were successfully concluded. The occupied areas were evacuated on 30th June, 1930—nearly five years ahead of the treaty date.

In the summer of 1930 the German Government could claim that by pursuing its policy of fulfilment it had a number of victories to its credit. Germany had become a member of the League of Nations with a permanent seat on the Council (1926); the Inter-Allied Military Control Commission had been abolished (November, 1929)—thus freeing the Government from an obvious restraint on rearmament; Allied supervision of Germany's internal affairs had been discontinued when the Young Plan came into force (May, 1930); finally, the Rhineland was free from enemy troops. Already in 1930 the Versailles Treaty and France's elaborate structure of defence against a revengeful Germany were beginning to crumble.

Towards the end of the 'twenties the period of uneasy but peaceful collaboration between Germany and France came to an end. Stresemann died in October, 1929, and, although the echo of his policy was to be heard for a brief time after his death, Germany was now consciously entering into a new phase in her relations with the Allies. It was a period in which the nationalist spirit would predominate, in which Germany would talk to her old enemies not as a subject and defeated nation but as an equal. This spirit, latent in the country during the years when the Republic seemed prosperous, was quickened by the economic crisis of 1929-31.

In October, 1929, a catastrophic fall in the value of shares occurred in the New York Stock Exchange; this was the first ominous sign of a world-wide economic depression. An immediate result of the depression in the U.S.A. was the cutting off of loans to Europe. America's investments in Germany fell from 1000 million dollars in 1928 to 550 million in 1929, and in the last months of 1929 she began calling in her short-term loans from Germany.<sup>1</sup> The next evidence of the slump was a general fall in the price of commodities in all parts of the world. One result of this fall was that the external

<sup>1</sup> *The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.

debt of every nation became more burdensome; the reparation payments from Germany, for example, were now, in terms of the goods which she had to sell in order to get the money, considerably larger than in 1928.

When the full effects of the crisis were felt in Germany in 1930, the strength of the reactionary parties increased daily, and the gospel that the miseries of the German people were due to the intolerable persecution by the Victor Powers had fruitful soil in which to spread. The evacuation of the Rhineland was celebrated by attacks on German supporters of the separatist movement which had been fathered by the French at the time of the Ruhr occupation, despite the promise of the German Government that, when the Allies left, these men would be protected. Dr. Curtius, who succeeded Stresemann as Foreign Minister, pointedly announced that, although the evacuation by the Allies of the Rhineland anticipated the treaty date by five years, Germany had not "the slightest intention of thanking them for going".<sup>1</sup>

In March, 1930, Heinrich Brüning, leader of the Centre Party, became Chancellor. For the first time in the history of the Republic no Socialist held office in the Cabinet which Brüning selected. The Chancellor did not attempt to rule long on democratic principles. In June he advised the President, von Hindenburg,<sup>2</sup> to make use of the special powers conferred on him by Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution to rule by decree in a state of emergency. Hindenburg agreed, and the Reichstag was dismissed. An index of the distress in the country was the increase of 2,200,000 in the unemployed between January, 1930, and January, 1931,<sup>3</sup> the total number on the latter date being 5 million.

The Germans insisted that reparations were at the root of their troubles. France was convinced that Germany was exaggerating her distress to excuse some new violation of the Versailles Treaty. She resisted successfully a German proposal to form a customs union with Austria. Austria, financially dependent on France, was virtually forbidden to unite, even economically, with her neighbour. Had the union taken place a financial crisis which occurred in Austria in May, 1931, might have been avoided. As it was, the greatest of Viennese banks, the Credit-Anstalt, declared its inability to meet its obligations. Germany's banking interests were closely linked

<sup>1</sup> *Germany Puts the Clock Back*: Mowrer.

<sup>2</sup> Hindenburg was elected President in 1925 after the death of Ebert.

<sup>3</sup> *Hitler the Pawn*: Olden.

with those of Austria, and the effect of this failure was immediately felt in the Reich. There was a run on the banks, the Reichsbank, for example, losing in withdrawals some 26 million pounds in one week.

It was now Germany's turn to face a financial crisis, with no hope of making any reparation payment to the Allied Governments or satisfying other of her foreign creditors, and with her economic and banking systems in danger of imminent collapse. On 20th June, 1931, President Hoover of the U.S.A. proposed a general moratorium for one year. All the Great Powers except France welcomed this proposal immediately. A fortnight elapsed before France gave her consent, and this hesitation was fatal to the scheme. Had she accepted without delay, along with the other powers, the postponement of all international debts for a year, confidence might have been restored, and the drain on Berlin and other banking centres stopped. As it was, Hoover's proposal brought no relief, and in Germany the crisis reached breaking-point.

On 9th July, Dr. Luther, President of the Reichsbank, visited Paris and London to try to arrange credits. He failed in both capitals. Although she had the gold, France hesitated to aid her old enemy lest this should be to her own disadvantage; while Britain by this time was herself in a critical position financially and unable to give help. On 13th July the Danat Bank, one of the largest concerns in Germany, failed. For two days every bank in Germany was closed, and then, when business was resumed, the Government, by a series of emergency decrees, had virtually assumed complete control of the banking and economic interests of the country. In August, 1931, the Basle Report, drawn up by an International Commission, emphasized the danger of pressing Germany for reparation payments beyond her means to provide. The year closed with a significant warning from Dr. Brüning to the Allies that if they wished to prevent the spread of the Nazi spirit in Germany they could do so only by giving to his country such help as was needful from the standpoint of humanity.

## CHAPTER VII

### EXPERIMENT IN DICTATORSHIP: RUSSIA

WHEN the Great War was in progress there was living in Zürich Vladimir Ilyich Ulianov, known to history as Lenin, an exile from his native country, Russia. Born in 1870, Lenin had spent his life as a political rebel in spreading the gospel of revolutionary Communism as expounded by Karl Marx (1818-83).<sup>1</sup> In this cause he had suffered imprisonment in Russia, exile to Siberia, and poverty in foreign countries. The outbreak of the Great War, in which the workers of one country fought with those of another, forgetting, in his opinion, the common interest that bound them together, was disillusioning to Lenin. "Workers of the world, unite!" had been the challenge to Capitalism in the Communist Manifesto drawn up by Marx and his collaborator, Friedrich Engels, in 1848. Lenin hoped that out of this "imperial" struggle would come civil war, in which the workers would crush those who oppressed them.

In January, 1917, Lenin's dream of world revolution was growing dim. "We of the older generation," he said to some youthful Socialists, "may not see the decisive battles of this coming revolu-

<sup>1</sup> The essence of Communist theory is a classless society in which the ownership and control of the means of production are in the hands of the proletarian producers. In both a Socialist and a Communist society inequality of some kind must persist. Strachey, in *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, wrote: "Communists and Socialists reject the principle of equality of wages and salaries." (On the other hand, Bernard Shaw insisted that "equality of income . . . is the final and essential diagnostic of Communism".)

The difference between Socialism and Communism is explained by Strachey: Socialism is "a system of planned production for use in which the products are distributed in accordance with the quantity and quality of the work done"; Communism is "a social system which is also based upon planned production for use, but in which the products are distributed according to need, and work is done according to ability". In other words, the Socialist principle is: from each according to his capacity, to each according to his labour; that of the Communists: from each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs.

Strachey wrote that Communism is not "a mere dream", but that "it will be possible to base society upon this principle, as soon as certain psychological and material pre-requisites have been established". Socialism is regarded by many people as an essential bridge between a Capitalist society and a purely Communist one.

tion.”<sup>1</sup> By the same month more than a million Russian soldiers, it is said, disillusioned by the failure of the Tsar’s Government to organize the country for war (they lacked munitions, food, equipment—everything which the enemy seemed to have in abundance), had deserted from the front and were slowly making their way back to their homes. Two months later the Tsar’s Government was overthrown, and Lenin realized that the opportunity for which he had been patiently waiting for years had arrived.

The Russian Revolution sprang from spontaneous disorders among the people, caused by the privations they were suffering as a result of the war, in particular the lack of food. A general strike in Petrograd, in which soldiers and sailors joined, developed into a revolt. The Tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate, and the rule of the Romanovs, the dynasty that had exercised autocratic power over the peoples of Russia since 1613, came to an end. On 12th March, 1917, the Imperial Government ceased to exist, and two days later a Provisional Government of a Liberal kind was hastily formed with Prince Lvov at its head. It had the support of the Soviet of Workmen’s and Soldiers’ Deputies, an assembly of delegates from the factory and the army, and representing the extreme revolutionary spirit throughout the country. It was this news which came to Lenin and his friends in Zürich, and convinced them that the hour for action had come. They wished to return to Russia without delay, and now the German General Staff proved kind friends. Communism owes a great debt to the Germans, for it was they who arranged for the journey of Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, and other Bolshevik leaders from Switzerland through German territory to Russia.

The Germans had good grounds for hoping that the Bolshevik revolutionaries would prove a disturbing element to the Russian Government which had been formed, and they were not disappointed. When Lenin arrived in Petrograd a month after the Revolution had started, he shook the complacency of the moderate Social Democrats who were in command by upbraiding them for their timidity. To replace the Tsar’s Government by a *bourgeois* Cabinet, even if it professed to be Liberal, was not Lenin’s idea of revolution. Nor could power be shared by the Provisional Government and the Soviet of Workmen and Soldiers; complete authority had to pass into the hands of the proletarian Soviet. Lenin ordered his followers to give no support to the Provisional Government, and announced

<sup>1</sup> *The Hundred Years*: Guedalla.



that the Revolution was merely in its first transitional stage, and that the aim of the Bolshevik leaders was the "dictatorship of the proletariat".

"The Bolsheviks were that group of Marxists which aimed at the socialization of means of production by a seizure of power and a dictatorship nominally of factory workers but actually, as they had always insisted with the greatest frankness, of a few intellectuals."<sup>1</sup> It was at a congress held in London in 1903 that a split occurred among the Social Democrats of Russia, and the two parties, the Bolsheviks (Majority) and the Mensheviks (Minority), were formed. Both were ardent advocates of Marxist Communism, but they differed about the methods to be employed to put their theories into practice. The Bolsheviks believed in working, through a small enthusiastic central committee, for a revolution that would utterly uproot the Capitalist system and give this committee the power to impose its rule on the workers; the policy of the Mensheviks was to diffuse their doctrine among the mass of the people, and so prepare the ground for an evolutionary Communism which would not destroy the State as it stood but make use of it.

When Lenin arrived in Russia the Menshevik element was in control of the Soviets, and until the Bolsheviks had gained more support he could do little. Then started some months of intensive propaganda by Lenin and his friends. By the summer they had gained another valuable recruit, Trotsky, who had been in exile in America when the Revolution started. A premature Bolshevik rising in July, 1917, forced Lenin to flee and to seek safety in Finland. But by the autumn the preparations for a coup were complete. The Provisional Government with Kerensky at its head (he had replaced Lvov in the summer) no longer enjoyed the confidence of the people. It was a Government supported by the Allies and pledged to continue the war against Germany. But Russia needed peace and bread, and both of these the Bolsheviks offered.

On 7th November the Bolsheviks carried out their coup. In Petrograd, where detachments of Red Guards were stationed at strategic points, there was almost no resistance. Within a few hours the Bolsheviks were in occupation of the Winter Palace, the headquarters of the Provisional Government, and Kerensky and his colleagues were in flight. In other towns and districts the revolutionary fire spread. In Moscow there was desultory fighting, but the Bolsheviks gained control of the city. Lenin issued a decree giving

<sup>1</sup> *History of Russia*: Pares.

the land to the peasants, and all over Russia the decree was speedily acted upon. The peasants formed Soviets, divided the land among themselves, and settled down ardent supporters (for the time being) of Lenin and his Revolution. By 8th November, 1917, a Soviet Government was in nominal control of Russia, and a Council of People's Commissars had been formed with Lenin as chairman. The first stage of the Communist Revolution—the seizure of power by a band of leaders—was complete; there remained the task of imposing Communism on the 140 millions, of diverse race and language, that made up the Russian state.

That the Bolsheviks, when they carried out their coup, represented only a small section of the people was proved by the composition of a Constituent Assembly which was elected, by universal suffrage, shortly afterwards. The decision to call this assembly had been made before the Bolsheviks seized power. Some of their leaders favoured the postponement of the elections which had been arranged, but as the party had previously been a strong advocate of a Constituent Assembly it was decided not to interfere. When the elections were over, the Bolsheviks had only 175 representatives out of a total of 690. The Assembly lived one day. It was then disbanded, the Bolshevik leader Bukharin declaring "that the present counter-revolutionary majority of the Constituent Assembly has been elected with out-of-date voters' lists, that it represents a stage already passed by the Revolution, and that it attempts to block the road before the workmen's and peasants' movement."<sup>1</sup>

With power in the hands of the Soviets, Lenin's first aim was to end the war. He issued an appeal to the Allied Powers and their enemies for a general peace with no annexations and no indemnities. The appeal fell on deaf ears, and the Bolsheviks were forced to enter into negotiations for an independent peace with Germany. As it was essential for Lenin to end the war, Trotsky, the Soviet representative at the peace conference, was at a disadvantage. The terms which Germany insisted upon were so crushing that many of the Bolshevik leaders wished to refuse them. But Lenin urged them to accept, and gained his point only by a majority of one. By the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (3rd March, 1918) Russia surrendered the Ukraine and the Baltic states. With the collapse of Germany in November, 1918, the treaty became merely a scrap of paper, but Russia did not regain her Baltic territories (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and the large part of Poland she had lost.

<sup>1</sup> *Russia under Soviet Rule*: N. de Basily.

The Communist Revolution provoked counter-Bolshevik risings, and armies of White Russians were enrolled and trained to resist the Reds. Civil war raged, and Lenin was faced not only with the opposition of many of his own countrymen but also with that of the Western Powers. The Government survived this period of trial, and by the winter of 1920 the fighting was virtually over and the triumph of the Soviet complete. The Russian aristocrats were either killed (Nicholas II, his family, and members of his suite were put to death at Ekaterinburg on 16th July, 1918) or scattered throughout Western Europe, and the *bourgeois* forced into submission.

The Civil War had been a serious test for the Bolsheviks, and to meet the exigencies of the situation a form of "Military Communism" had had to be imposed. The Government requisitioned all the grain in the country, except what the peasants actually needed for their own use, and threatened with death those who refused to surrender their surplus. In the towns the nationalization of business concerns was carried out on a large scale, traders and manufacturers, whose premises were often the centres of anti-Bolshevik activity, being expropriated. Though this was done as a military need, it was in keeping with the ultimate aims of the Communists. The confiscation of grain alienated the peasants, but worse was to happen to them in 1921 when the harvest was ruined owing to drought and some three millions died of starvation.<sup>1</sup> The famine had terrible consequences. "First in the grain-growing provinces on the Volga, and later in Ukraine and Crimea, whole masses of the population broke loose from their moorings in their hunt for food, and cases of cannibalism were reported."<sup>2</sup> The tens of thousands of waifs, rendered homeless by the devastation of the Revolution and the Civil War, were increased in this time of famine to hundreds of thousands; and these, joining together in bands, became a menace in the towns, attacking and sometimes killing pedestrians.

In 1921 Russia was a ruined country. The transport system was in an unserviceable state, and the production of industry was but one-sixth of what it had been in pre-war days. The peasants were starving and bitterly antagonistic to the Soviet Government. The "terror" with which the Reds had imposed their will was not forgotten. It is impossible to give absolutely accurate figures of those condemned to death by the Bolsheviks during the Civil War, but

<sup>1</sup> The figure quoted by the Soviet Delegation to the Genoa Conference in 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Russia*: Pares.

W. H. Chamberlain, in *The Russian Revolution, 1917-21*, proved that the White Russian estimate of millions of victims was but a legend and, after a careful examination of different authorities, gave 50,000 as the number of those executed during the Civil War by the Bolsheviks—not including insurgents shot with arms in their hands. In 1921 there were risings against the Soviet Government in various parts of the country, and even the Kronstadt sailors, among the earliest of the Bolshevik supporters, mutinied.

The genius of Lenin now showed itself in his decision to alter fundamentally the economic plan which he had intended to follow. He threw overboard the strict doctrines of Communism, and proposed to adopt a New Economic Policy (N.E.P.), which smacked suspiciously of Capitalism. The Tenth Congress of the Party, convened in the spring of 1921, accepted Lenin's proposal, although there was considerable opposition from some of the Bolshevik leaders. The N.E.P. was a reversal to private trading. It allowed the peasants, after they had paid a tax to the Government in kind, to sell their products in the open market. Similarly in the towns private trading was permitted. But the Government's surrender to Capitalist principles of trading was not by any means complete. The private trader had to compete with State enterprises and large co-operative societies that had the backing of the Government. Moreover, the Bolsheviks still kept under their own control the nationalized land, banking, foreign trade, heavy industry, and the railways. The N.E.P. was in the nature of a strategic retreat—a breathing-space, in which the country might recover its strength after the Civil War, in order to plunge forward with greater ardour than before on the path of pure Communism. The Western Powers in Europe, which hitherto had been anxious to keep the Soviet at arm's length, unbent with the institution of the N.E.P. In 1921 Britain concluded a commercial treaty with the Soviet, and in the following year Russia was represented at an economic conference held at Genoa.

In 1917 Stalin, one of the first Bolshevik leaders, had been appointed Commissar of Nationalities, and, despite the turmoil of the years of Civil War, during which Stalin took an active part in operations both against White Russians and Poles, the Commissar was able to consider all the intricate details of a scheme for confederating the different peoples and states of Russia into an organic whole. In 1923 the Constitution for a Confederation of Soviet States was ready, and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics was

formed. By 1929 seven republics were united, by far the largest being the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic.<sup>1</sup> While the Central Government of the Confederation controlled the foreign policy, defence, foreign trade, &c., of the whole country, each independent Soviet republic retained its own language (or languages), and enjoyed autonomy in cultural matters and in local administration. It was not nationality that bound the Soviet states together, or racial kinship or language, but the unifying principle of Communism, upon which the economy of the states was founded. The constitution was so devised as to permit of new republics (those which discarded Capitalism) joining the Confederation; in theory, also, a state was at liberty to secede.

At the base of the Communist Government was the Soviet, the proletarian council. Village, town, district, and provincial Soviets were elected. Once a year a Congress of Soviets, consisting of delegates from the provincial bodies, met. One of its duties was to appoint a Central Executive Committee which carried on in the interval between the calling of Congresses. This Central Committee delegated a great part of its authority to a select inner council, the Præsidium. Corresponding to the Cabinet in democratic countries was a Council of People's Commissars; the election of these ministers was in the hands of the Central Executive Committee. Despite the wide democratic basis upon which this constitution was built, in actual practice the governing power in Soviet Russia rested in the hands of the Communist Party. This party, which numbered 312,000 members in 1919 and about 2,000,000 in the beginning of the 'thirties, consisted of picked and disciplined men and women, ardent believers in the Communist faith, who were ambitious only to further the spread of their doctrine. Periodically purges were carried out and backsliders expelled from the party. The Communists controlled all the Soviets, and indeed all the administrative machinery of the republics, so that the chief power did not lie in the hands of the Central Executive Committee but in those of the Communist *Politbureau*, the highest organ of the party. Lenin was President of the Council of Commissars, but his hold over the country, like that of Stalin, was rooted in his control of the Communist Party.

One vital instrument in the dictatorship of the Bolsheviks was

<sup>1</sup> The others were: the Ukraine, White Russia, Transcaucasia, Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The number of republics was increased to eleven under a new constitution of 1936.

the United State Political Department (O.G.P.U.), set up as part of the constitution in 1923. Its purpose was to "combine the revolutionary efforts of the united republics in the fight with political and economic counter-revolution, espionage and banditism".<sup>1</sup> The O.G.P.U., with its secret agents in every house, factory, and farm in Russia, succeeded in inspiring terror among the people. It was accused by some foreign critics of using all sorts of refined methods of torture to extract confessions from those in prison, while popular newspapers credited it with the command of peculiarly potent drugs which incited people to confess to crimes whether they had committed them or not.

Lenin died in January, 1924. He had been shot by an assassin in 1918 and had never recovered entirely from this attack. In May, 1922, and again in March, 1923, he suffered a stroke. Towards the end of his life he was partly paralysed, but he managed to retain the threads of the Soviet's policy in his fingers till his death. By this time he had become like a god in the eyes of his countrymen. He had inspired the Bolshevik Revolution, crushed the White Russians and their foreign allies, given land to the peasants, introduced opportunely his N.E.P., and laid firmly the foundations of a new Russia.

There were difficulties about his successor. Four men had claims to become the head of the state: Kamenev, Zinoviev, Stalin, and Trotsky, all ardent workers and clever leaders in the fight for Communism. Trotsky was crushed out by his three rivals, who formed a triumvirate in January, 1924, to take over the direction of the Government. Eventually Stalin got rid of his colleagues, and by 1929 was virtually dictator, with the others discredited or in exile.

After Lenin's death a fundamental cleavage which had existed for some time among the leaders in the Communist Party came to the surface. One party wished to do everything possible to incite a Communist Revolution in other countries; their opponents were content (at least for the time being) to build up Communism in Russia and to avoid incurring the hostility of foreign powers. Trotsky was the protagonist of pure and undiluted world Communism. He urged the Soviet Government to continue propaganda in foreign countries, and to give its support to the Communist Parties of Europe and America in order that a general rising of the proletariat might create a World Communist Society. It was in pursuance of

<sup>1</sup> *The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.

this doctrine that Lenin founded the Third Communist International in March, 1919. This, the Comintern, carried out its revolutionary propaganda abroad in all sorts of ways. It was this aspect of the Soviet's policy that aroused distrust and hostility in Western Europe and in America. In China and other Asiatic countries the Comintern was particularly active, and at times very successful in propagating the Communist faith. Repeatedly in France, Britain, and other countries, there were scares about the secret activities of the agents of the Comintern to undermine the loyalty of the workers. In 1927 the British Government fathered a raid on Arcos, the official centre in London of a Russian trade mission, while the withdrawal of Radovsky, a Soviet ambassador, was demanded by the French Government for alleged propaganda in the French army. While both Britain and France gave *de jure* recognition to the Soviet in 1924, the activity of the Comintern caused at times strained relations between the Western Powers and Russia. After the raid on Arcos there was a complete breach between Britain and the Soviet until 1930.

Stalin, well aware of the suspicions abroad regarding the Comintern, wished to dissociate the Soviet Government entirely from this Communist body, and to give no countenance to the propaganda which it carried on. In other words, he was content to establish Communism solely in Russia without attempting to stir up (at least in the 'twenties) a world-wide revolution. This to Trotsky was the attitude of a renegade. He was impulsive; Stalin, deliberative. The two disliked each other personally, and this gave venom to the quarrel between them on the matter of policy. Stalin, with control of the Party machine (he had been appointed General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party by Lenin in 1922), had an advantage over Trotsky, and was able to rid himself of this fire-brand. In 1924, Trotsky, denounced as a traitor, was forced to leave the War Commissariat. After an interval he returned to office (in 1925) to the Department of National Economy. But as long as he held any official position he was dangerous to Stalin, who, accordingly, brought about his expulsion from the Communist Party in 1928. He was banished to Turkestan, and a year later (1929) exiled from the U.S.S.R. From foreign countries he carried on a vigorous campaign against Stalin and against the betrayal of Communist principles which the dictator was encouraging. Other supporters of World Communism fell also under Stalin's displeasure. Zinoviev lost his position as President of the Comintern, and in

1927 was expelled from the Central Executive of the Party. He and Kamenev suffered imprisonment, but, being willing to recant, they were received again into temporary grace at the end of the 'twenties and got minor posts in the Government.

Trotsky and his friends represented the Left opposition to Stalin—the view that Stalin's Communism was merely parochial and timid. To the political Right were other opponents with whom the dictator had to deal; they complained that the pace of the Revolution in Russia was too severe, and that the interests of the peasant population were being sacrificed to those of the factory workers. The leaders of the Right were Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomsky. They accused Stalin of carrying out too rapidly the collectivization of the land. This policy was an essential part of the Soviet Five-Year Plan to industrialize Russia, and it was in the discussion of this plan, for which Stalin's opponents wished to substitute a two-year plan of "aid to agriculture", that the Right opposition came to the fore. Again Stalin proved the victor, and forced these critics out of the Government.

Fundamental to the Soviet system was the idea of planning, and, while this was more or less continuous, what was called the first "Five-Year Plan of Development of the National Economy of the U.S.S.R." was launched in 1929. Only after exhaustive preparations by a State Planning Commission (*Gosplan*—a body of 700 experts) were the details of the scheme approved and the wheels set in motion. The first purpose of the plan was to transform the Soviet Union, a pre-war agrarian country, into one of the foremost of industrial nations. The Soviet was the possessor of vast stores of mineral wealth, and it planned to bring about in the space of five years an industrial revolution such as had taken two or three generations to complete in Western Europe. The second main purpose of the plan was to organize farming on a large-scale collective basis and to mechanize it. Since a well-educated proletariat is necessary if a highly industrialized country is to function with success, part of the Soviet's plan was an intensive scheme of education to rid Russia of illiteracy. The ultimate aim of the Five-Year Plan was to raise the standard of living of the people and to improve them culturally, and so move far on the Socialist road to the classless Communist society.

The Five-Year Plan was carried out in the spirit of a crusade. By intensive propaganda the workers were urged to go one better than the "optimum" figure which had been adopted. The success



of the industrial section of the plan demanded concentration on the production of capital goods—machinery, and the raw materials essential for the building up of industry—and consequently the supply of consumption goods for the workers was inadequate. The ordinary necessities of life were scarce, but the Bolsheviks hoped that they were laying the foundation for the production of consumption goods on a generous scale later. With such enthusiasm was the work undertaken that the industrial scheme for which five years had been allotted was completed, in its main outlines, in four and a quarter—this despite the enormous difficulties which faced the Soviet. Apart from the shortage of capital equipment, there was a shortage of skilled workmen, technicians, experts of all kinds. The Western Powers and the U.S.A. came to the aid of the Soviet. They considered Russia's scheme of intensive work fantastic, but nevertheless they sent their experts, and exported machines, rolling-stock, and all the essential capital equipment that Russia needed before she could start to build on her own resources.

In industry the Five-Year Plan was reckoned on the whole a great success. Giant industrial and engineering undertakings were completed: the Stalingrad Tractor Works and the Moscow Lorry Factory; the Dnieper Dam and its hydro-electric power station; the Turksib Railway; the White Sea-Baltic Canal (completed in 1933); Magnitogorsk, a new town and an "industrial Colossus". "Over ninety new towns owed their origin to the first Five-Year Plan, some of them in areas which till then had remained practically unutilized, such as the Kuznetsk district in the neighbourhood of Tashkent at the back of India. The industry of the Urals, the earliest in Russia, was multiplied fivefold. The industrial output yearly increased, by 20 per cent in 1929, 37 per cent in 1930, and similar large figures later."<sup>1</sup> Incidentally the plan put an end to unemployment in the U.S.S.R. by 1930, at a time when the unemployment figures in most other countries were soaring to unexampled heights. The economic crisis of 1929-31 was an unexpected blow to Russia; the fall in world prices upset completely the foreign trade arrangements of the plan. The Soviet was forced to export far more than she had anticipated in order to get the foreign credits she needed for the import of necessary machinery from the U.S.A. and other countries.

The following figures, quoted by N. de Basily<sup>2</sup> from official Soviet sources (with a recommendation by him that they have to

<sup>1</sup> *History of Russia*: Pares.

<sup>2</sup> *Russia under Soviet Rule*.

be taken with caution), show how successful the Five-Year Plan was in increasing production:

	1913	1928	1934
Crude Oil (million tons)	9.2	11.6	25.5
Coal (million tons)	29.1	35.4	93.6
Pig-iron (million tons)	4.2	3.3	10.4
Steel (million tons)	4.2	4.2	9.5

There were corresponding increases in the output of copper, cement, electricity, motor-lorries, &c. "Even when allowance is made for any possible rectifications of the figures," wrote de Basily, "it cannot be denied that the quantitative results of Russia's industrialization have been enormous." Less satisfactory was the quality of the products of the Five-Year Plan. It was often very low, and the need for improvement in this respect was repeatedly emphasized by the Bolshevik leaders. The improvement in transport, also, proved disappointing in comparison with the increase in industrial production. Deficiencies in the Five-Year Plan were frequently ascribed by the Soviet to wreckers, and the trials of professors, technicians, and others took place. Sometimes foreign experts were accused of wrecking activities, for example a group of British Metro-Vickers engineers in 1933.

A feature of the Five-Year Plan was a drive by the Government to reverse the N.E.P. which it had been forced to adopt in 1921. Since then private business had been allowed to develop, with a consequent increase in the number of independent traders (Nepmen) competing with the State-controlled undertakings. Actually private enterprise was in a very flourishing condition before the Five-Year Plan started. In 1927 it was responsible for 17 per cent of industrial production, 90 per cent of agricultural production, and 35 per cent of retail trade.<sup>1</sup> But the Soviet's policy of squeezing out the private trader was successful. The Nepmen succumbed to the heavy taxation imposed on them and the competition of trading organizations supported by the Government. The 17 per cent of industrial output for which private enterprise was responsible in 1927 was reduced in 1933 to .07 per cent.

The greatest Soviet offensive was directed against the peasants, particularly the comparatively wealthy peasant-proprietors, called

<sup>1</sup> Figures from *Our Own Times* by King-Hall.

Kulaks. Lenin had told these peasants to seize the land; they had done so, and in 1928 were staunch supporters of the Capitalist principle of property-owning. While in 1917, the year of the Revolution, there had been 16 million peasant farms, ten years later the number had increased to 25 million. It was the task of the Five-Year Plan to persuade or force the peasants to surrender their independence and to work the land in large collective farms. There was, apart from Communist doctrine, reason in the Soviet's attitude. In 1928 the methods of agriculture which the peasants followed and the implements in their possession were still primitive. Five million wooden ploughs were in use, and nearly half the harvest was reaped by scythe and sickle.<sup>1</sup> If the production of the soil was to be increased to the extent that the Soviet required in order to raise the standard of living of all the workers, the only possible method was the mechanization of farming on a large scale; and the advantage of this change could be fully reaped only if the land was worked on the basis of very large collective holdings.

But on this point the whole Five-Year Plan nearly broke down. The Kulaks, and even the poor peasants, resisted the Soviet's attempts to collectivize the land, and had to be forced to fall in with the scheme. Figures quoted by N. de Basily<sup>2</sup> show the progress of collectivization.

	No. of Collectivized Households	No. of Non-Collectivized Households	Percentage of Collectivized Households
1928, June 1	416,700	24,095,300	1·7
1929    ,,	1,007,700	24,830,830	3·9
1930    ,,	5,998,100	19,417,600	23·6
1931    ,,	13,033,200	11,697,800	52·7
1932    ,,	15,055,100	9,428,000	61·5
1933    ,,	15,211,800	8,409,000	64·4
1934, Oct. 1	15,867,700	5,868,900	73·0

In 1928 collective farms were organized fairly slowly, but in 1929-30 the pace was quickened, and the resistance of the Kulaks became serious. The Government used its weapons without mercy. Many Kulaks were expelled from their farms and exiled to distant parts of the Union. The farming population retaliated with attacks on Soviet agents; shots were fired, peasants killed, and others

<sup>1</sup> *Short History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. II: R. Page Arnot.

<sup>2</sup> *Russia under Soviet Rule*.

captured and put to death. There were forty executions a day in February, 1930.<sup>1</sup> Almost a second Civil War was in progress.

Then the Kulaks used their final and desperate weapon against the Government. If they were forced to join collective farms, they determined that at least they would enter them penniless. So they destroyed machinery and slaughtered great quantities of stock. Stalin realized that the pace had been too swift, and in a famous newspaper article from his pen published in March, 1930 (it was entitled "Dizziness from Success"), he called a halt and reproached the Communist officials for over-zeal. But this did not save the destruction of stock, a grave blow to the agricultural economy of Russia. Stalin himself gave figures <sup>2</sup> at the 17th Congress of the Communist Party to show the decrease of live stock and to emphasize the seriousness of what had happened.

	1929	1933
Horses .. ..	34,000,000	16,600,000
Cattle .. ..	68,100,000	38,600,000
Pigs .. ..	20,900,000	12,200,000
Sheep and Goats	147,200,000	50,600,000
	270,200,000	118,000,000

The pace was slowed down, but Stalin had no intention of giving up his plan for complete collectivization. In 1932 the peasants revolted for a second time. This was the most tragic period of the struggle. The peasants, both those who still retained their holdings and many in the collective farms, harvested what they themselves needed and left the rest of the grain to rot in the fields. How Stalin faced up to this mutiny was told by Gunther.<sup>3</sup> To get food for the town workers, his officials demanded and seized from each peasant the normal tax in grain that he had been in the habit of paying. A large part of the grain which the peasant had reaped for himself and his family, and which was only sufficient for them, was confiscated; on some farms almost all that had been harvested was seized. The punishment of the peasants was terrible. There was a widespread famine, and in the spring of 1933 several million people died of starvation in sight of the weed-covered fields in which the season's crops (they had been abundant) had been left to rot.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Russia*: Pares.      <sup>2</sup> *Russia under Soviet Rule*: de Basily.

<sup>3</sup> *Inside Europe*.

In April, 1933, the Government, determined that there would be no repetition of the famine conditions of that spring, declared a "war to a finish". Even in the collective farms acts of sabotage had been committed, and now local managers were more closely supervised, and replaced by others if they showed any signs of sympathy with the peasant rebels. On the farms brigades of workers with definite tasks were organized. The guarding of crops in 1933 was undertaken by bands of trustworthy agents, and special detachments of the O.G.P.U. were transferred to the country districts to keep watch on the peasant population. By 1934 the victory of the Government was complete. The greater part of the land was now organized into some 250,000 large farms. The recalcitrant Kulaks had disappeared into Labour Camps, to Siberia, or to work on some of the giant undertakings (the White Sea-Baltic Canal, for example) of the Soviet. The number of Kulaks in 1928 was 5,618,000, and of this total, according to Molotov, President of the Council of Commissars, only 149,000 remained by 1st January, 1934. The rest had been driven from their homes or had perished.

The offensive against illiteracy during the five years of the Plan bore fruitful results. Compulsory education was established, "and the percentage of literacy rose from 67 in 1930 to 90 in 1933". While in 1929 the total number of pupils in elementary and secondary schools was 14½ million, by 1933 this number had been increased to nearly 26½ million.<sup>1</sup> From the point of view of the number of children attending school the Soviet could claim in 1934 to have made great progress. But N. de Basily insisted that the standard of education was very low, and that the interests of education were regularly sacrificed to the needs of Communist propaganda. "The Soviet school, particularly in the country districts, at the beginning of 1930, had only a distant resemblance to an educational organization worthy of the name."<sup>2</sup> There were visitors to Russia, on the other hand, who commended the Soviet school, and the keenness of the authorities to experiment in advanced methods of instruction and organization.

To show the position of education at the conclusion of the first Five-Year Plan, the figures in table opposite are quoted in *Russia* by P. H. Box.

The Soviet Government attacked religion, since Communism itself was in the eyes of its worshippers a faith that could brook no

<sup>1</sup> *Our Own Times*: King-Hall.

<sup>2</sup> *Russia under Soviet Rule*.

rival. "Christianity is designed for the exploitation of the masses" was an aphorism of Lenin's. But it was not only against Christianity that the attack was directed; all other religions came under the ban. How far religious persecution was actually carried out was difficult to discover. In June, 1921, a decree was issued forbidding the teaching of religion to any person under 18, except at home. Other measures were taken to crush the organized Church, and to bring the youth of the country to manhood without a knowledge of religious matters. Priests were deprived of all legal status, and influential churchmen exiled to Siberia. From some schools Christian children were excluded.

	1914	1927-8	1932
Literacy Level (percentage of population between 8 and 50 years):			
General .. .. .	—	58.8	90.0
Urban .. .. .	—	78.5	97.0
Rural .. .. .	—	48.3	88.0
Number of pupils in elementary and secondary schools:			
Elementary .. .. .	7,235,000	9,870,000	18,754,000
Secondary .. .. .	565,000	1,409,000	4,359,000
Children of 8 to 11 in elementary schools in percentage to total ..	—	51.4	98.0
Children in pre-school institutions .. .. .	—	308,000	5,232,000
Percentage of children of 3 to 7 in pre-school institutions ..	—	1.6	23.7

The deep-rooted faith of the mass of the people of the U.S.S.R. remained firm under this persecution, and in 1928 a new and more vigorous offensive was opened by the Government. Decrees followed each other in quick succession: religious activity of all kinds, except worship, was forbidden; anti-religious propaganda was carried out in the schools; anti-religious museums were opened; and churches were closed in many places. In the Soviet Press in 1929 it was reported that during six months of that year 423 churches had been closed. Against the Soviet attack on Christianity protests were uttered by the Pope and by representative leaders in Protestant countries.

## CHAPTER VIII

### EXPERIMENT IN DICTATORSHIP: ITALY

"FASCISM," wrote G. D. H. and Margaret Cole in 1933 (that is, before the heavy diversion of economic resources to armaments and the furtherance of imperialist policies had begun), "is essentially an outgrowth of the psychology of disillusionment and defeat."<sup>1</sup> It was in Italy immediately after the Great War that the seeds of Fascism were first planted; for there both a feeling of defeat and a sense of disillusion were widespread. During the war the Italians had been badly beaten at Caporetto in October, 1917, and, although they won a victory over the exhausted Austrians a year later, this did not remove entirely the humiliation of the previous disaster. Then came the disillusionment of the peace settlement. Italy had hoped to take her place, on an equality with her Allies, as a first-class power, with an enlarged territory and colonial possessions that would give her further hope of expansion. The Allies treated her scurvily. True, she received the Trentino and the Tirol as far as the Brenner Pass, the Dalmatian port of Zara, and the island of Lagosta; but neither the rest of the Dalmatian coast, nor the protectorate over Albania, nor Fiume, and, worst of all, not one acre of German territory in Africa was conceded to her at Versailles--this despite the sacrifices Italy had made; the mobilization of 6,000,000 men, and a death-roll of nearly 750,000.

When the demobilized soldiers returned home their dissatisfaction was increased by the condition in which they found their country. Among the civilian population also there was widespread discontent. Italy's resources had been exhausted by the drain of the war, her exchequer was empty (there was, in fact, a large Budget deficit), and the economic situation was serious. The Government, moreover, seemed incapable of ruling. An Orlando was succeeded by a Nitti, and he in turn by a Giolitti, and still the Cabinet showed itself unable to tackle the political and economic difficulties that faced it, or to follow a definite policy to restore to Italy its self-respect. In Parliament there was a condition of stalemate. The

<sup>1</sup> *The Intelligent Man's Review of Europe To-day.*

number of Socialists had increased considerably after the Great War, but without the support of the peasants (mainly adherents of a Catholic Popular Party) they had no hope of becoming strong enough to form an administration. Yet they were sufficiently numerous to harrass the Government and to prevent effective rule by their *bourgeois* opponents.

People of conservative outlook were ready in 1919 to follow a leader who would free them from the rule of incompetents, and who would give them some feeling of security in a world that seemed unstable and in danger of collapsing into chaos at any moment. They were tired of weak democratic rule, of Parliamentary corruption, of unemployment. Moreover, there was restlessness among the Socialist groups, and the threat of an uprising on the part of the Left extremists, who, since the Russian Revolution, had found their inspiration in the teaching of the Bolsheviks. Finally, an intense nationalist spirit pervaded Italy, and this needed a leader to give it its fullest expression. For a time Gabriele d'Annunzio was a heroic figure in Italian eyes. In the teeth of Allied opposition he seized Fiume in September, 1919, and in 1920 was still in possession of the city, defying in flamboyant speeches both the Allied Council and Giolitti's Government in Rome. His exploit was a visible expression of the national pride that surged through Italy after the war. But d'Annunzio's adventure came to an inglorious end in January, 1921, when he was ejected from Fiume, and Italian patriots looked elsewhere for a leader.

They found him in Benito Mussolini (born 1883), son of a blacksmith, and a descendant of peasant stock. As a child he was a normal, restless being. "I was not a good boy," he wrote himself, "nor did I stir the family or the dislike of my own associates in school by standing at the head of my class."<sup>1</sup> His education, first at an elementary, and then at a boarding school, was completed by a course of study for a teacher's diploma. After gaining this he taught for a year. Then in 1902 he went to Switzerland, where he spent three years in work of various kinds,<sup>2</sup> with intervals when he was penniless, studying meanwhile the political and social sciences, and making a name for himself as an ardent agitator in the cause of Socialism. The intemperance of his speeches brought about his expulsion from two Cantons, Geneva and Lausanne. At the age of 21 he returned to

<sup>1</sup> *My Autobiography*: Mussolini (translated by R. W. Child).

<sup>2</sup> "I worked with skill as a labourer. I worked usually as a mason and felt the fierce grim pleasure of construction. I made translation from Italian into French and vice versa. I did whatever came to hand." (*Ibid.*)



Italy. He served in a Bersaglieri regiment, and then after another spell of teaching found in political journalism scope for his genius and for the expression of his revolutionary Socialism. He was a vigorous opponent of Italy's imperialist war against the Turks in Libya (1911-12), and in *Avanti*, a Socialist paper of which he became editor in 1912, he condemned the militaristic spirit of his countrymen and their pride in Italy's paltry struggle for territory. The sentiments he uttered then were strangely out of harmony with his later utterances after he had become dictator. Referring in his autobiography to the years before the Great War, and recalling the incessant riots and threats of revolution in Italy, he wrote:

"I thought then, as I think now, that only the common denominator of a great sacrifice of blood could have restored to all the Italian nation an equalization of rights and duties. The attempt at revolution—'the red week'—was not revolution as much as it was chaos. No leaders. No means to go on! The middle class and the *bourgeoisie* gave us another picture of their insipid spirit."<sup>1</sup>

When war broke out in 1914 Mussolini was in favour of Italy's intervention on the side of the Allies, and on this issue parted company with his Socialist friends. He gave up the editorship of *Avanti*, and founded a new Socialist paper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, in which he urged his own point of view. After Italy entered the war Mussolini served as a private soldier. In February, 1917, he was seriously wounded, along with a number of his companions, by the premature bursting of one of their own grenades in the trench where they were standing. He spent some months in hospital, was discharged from the army in August, and returned a month later to his old task of editing *Il Popolo d'Italia*. He continued to urge the prosecution of the war, and pressed for an adequate share of the spoils of victory for Italy.

When 1919 came, Mussolini, still an ardent Socialist, was dissatisfied like others of his countrymen with the weak liberal-democratic Government which claimed to represent the Italian people. He founded in March, 1919, the first *Fascio di Combattimento* (forerunner of the Fascist Party), an association of ex-soldiers, pledged to support a very radical programme. "It was republican, democratic, anti-clerical, and even to some extent internationalist."<sup>2</sup> Among the demands which Mussolini put forward were: universal suffrage; liberty of the Press, of propaganda, and of religion; redistribution of the national wealth, and the division of land among

<sup>1</sup> *My Autobiography*: Mussolini.

<sup>2</sup> *The Intelligent Man's Review of Europe To-day*: Cole and Cole.

the peasants; general disarmament, and the abolition of secret treaties. While Mussolini was a supporter of the workers and of the demands (legitimate and otherwise) which they made, he was hostile to the recognized leaders of the Socialist Party, disapproving in particular of the Left bias that some of them showed, and of their international connections. He wished, moreover, to be the supreme leader, and could not brook the rivalry of others for whose ability he had considerable contempt.

In 1919-20 there were constant strikes in Italy, with Mussolini and his Fascist supporters generally in sympathy with the workers. But Mussolini then began to insist that, while the cause of the outbreaks was always said to be economic, "in truth the end was wholly political; the real intention was to strike a full blow in the face of the State's authority, against the middle classes and against disciplined order, with a view to establishing the Soviets in Italy".<sup>1</sup> In the autumn of 1920 industrial unrest culminated in the seizure in the north of some 600 factories by the workers; over half a million were concerned in this exploit. The Government made no attempt to dislodge the workers, who, unable to get supplies of raw materials, found themselves immediately in difficulties. The extremists among the Socialists (they had plenty of arms) were eager now to carry out some more violent move against the Government, but leaders of moderate opinion were in control, and they were determined to behave with a respect for the constitution. After 75 days' occupation of the factories, they realized that their coup had failed, and negotiated with the employers for the resumption of work on normal conditions.

It was at this point that Mussolini's Socialism became something peculiarly his own. He lost his taste for revolutionary economic reforms, intensified the nationalist appeal of his programme, and stood forward as the unflinching enemy of the Bolshevism that was insidiously spreading among the honest but gullible workers. To crush this evil spirit became the task of the Fascists. The movement now got its strength (apart from its ex-soldier members) "from the *petite bourgeoisie* and the peasants . . . those elements in the population which combined hostility to large-scale Capitalism with an intense fear of the coming of a Socialist and still more of a Communist régime".<sup>2</sup> Fascism spread throughout Italy and the party became stronger every day. The Socialists, on the other hand, were

<sup>1</sup> *My Autobiography*: Mussolini.

<sup>2</sup> *The Intelligent Man's Review of Europe To-day*: Cole and Cole.  
(F 774)

weakened by disunity in the ranks, particularly after the fiasco of the occupation of the factories. The Communists broke away to form an organization of their own, linked with the Third International, while even among the orthodox Socialists who remained there was a breach between the Right and Left wings. The strength of the Fascists was increased by the addition of d'Annunzio's followers, who, after the evacuation of Fiume in January, 1921, acknowledged Mussolini as their national leader.

In 1921-22 guerrilla warfare raged throughout Italy between the Fascists and their opponents. The Fascists organized armed bands to crush Bolshevism, this evil spirit working, in their opinion, against the powers of good. In actual practice this meant attacking Socialists and Communists in the streets, beating them up and dosing them with castor-oil, breaking into their homes and destroying their headquarters. They justified their tactics by pointing to an ever-growing list of atrocities committed by their opponents: the horrible murder of a young Fascist boy upon a bridge of the Arno River,<sup>1</sup> the explosion of a bomb in a Milan theatre during a performance, with the death of twenty persons and the mutilation of fifty others, and so on. The raids which the Fascists carried out were thoroughly planned. Balbo in his *Diary* described a typical raid in the provinces of Forli and Ravenna, when for almost twenty-four hours truckloads of Fascists raced through the countryside, "destroying and burning all the centres of Socialist and Communist organizations", their passing marked "by mounting columns of fire and smoke".<sup>2</sup>

In the Parliamentary election held in May, 1921, 33 Fascist members gained seats, including Mussolini. The leader—the Duce he was called—now changed his *Fasci* into a regular political party and imposed on his followers a measure of discipline which had before been lacking. In September, 1922, Mussolini won King Victor Emmanuel III to his side by declaring his support of the monarchy. At about the same time as he discarded his republicanism, Mussolini pushed the anti-clerical part of his original programme into the background. The leader was paving the way for the coup which he had in mind. The army was already on his side, as were

<sup>1</sup> The boy was beaten and thrown over the parapet into the water. "As the poor victim, by a dull instinct of self-preservation, clung to the railing bars with his fingers, the Communists rushed upon him and beat his knuckles until our martyr, whose jellied hands were slackening their grip, finally let go and was plunged into the Arno." (*My Autobiography*: Mussolini (translated by Child).)

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Under the Axe of Fascism* by Salvemini.

also the large industrialists, prepared to give their backing to any leader who crushed revolutionary agitation in the country.

In the autumn of 1922 Mussolini felt that he was strong enough to undermine the liberal-democratic foundation on which the weak Government of Italy rested. In October took place the historic "March on Rome". Actually, according to Gunther,<sup>1</sup> it was not a victorious march on Rome at all. What happened was that "the Fascists took possession of a number of cities, with the army, 'neutral', standing aside. Mussolini travelled to Rome by sleeping-car, and the fifty thousand Fascists who had assembled in Rome were quietly dispersed the next day." But with this force at his command Mussolini could not be disregarded. On the day of his arrival in Rome (October 30th) the Duce was invited by the king to form a Cabinet. The Government which he formed was a coalition, he himself being Prime Minister and also retaining in his own hands the direction of both Foreign and Home Affairs. He was willing at this point to give a semblance of constitutional authority to his rule, provided that the real power remained in his own hands. In 1923 he forced a new electoral law through Parliament (the opposition accepted it knowing that if they refused the Assembly would be forcibly dissolved) to ensure that the power of the Fascists would remain unchallenged. Under the old system of proportional representation Mussolini was aware that a general election would not give him control of a new Parliament. By the electoral law of 1923 it was enacted that a party which gained 25 per cent of the votes cast could claim two-thirds of the seats, the remainder being divided among the opposition. In the 1924 elections 65 per cent of the electorate voted Fascist, and Parliament was filled with a band of Mussolini's followers. Against the Duce's legislative Acts the opposition might speak bitterly, but it could not prevent their becoming effective.

It was claimed at the time by the Fascists that Mussolini's coup in October, 1922, was necessary to save Italy from Bolshevism—the same claim as was made later by Hitler in Germany, by Dollfuss in Austria, by Franco in Spain. Anti-Fascists denied this claim, and actually Mussolini's advocates no longer made mention of it once the Fascist régime was securely in place. Salvemini quoted in *Under the Axe of Fascism* a statement from Professor Volpe's official history of the Fascist movement, admitting that in the autumn and winter of 1921 and in 1922 "infatuation for Russia and its Bolshevism was

<sup>1</sup> *Inside Europe*.

disappearing; credit for this must be given also to those Socialist leaders who had paid a visit to Russia to see with their own eyes the conditions prevailing in that country. . . . But while many even among the Fascist sympathizers thought that the time had come for Fascism to disarm . . . . Fascism to the contrary pushed forward the mobilization of its forces. The main target was now the Government, or, we may say, the Parliamentary régime."

What was the opinion of Mussolini held by foreign statesmen in 1922? Philip Guedalla wrote that the visit of the Duce in 1922 to an Allied capital "with the full panoply of iron mouth and rolling eye" prompted Asquith to ask Bonar Law what he thought of Mussolini. The Premier's reply was succinct. "A lunatic," he said.<sup>1</sup> This recalls that a year later, at the time of the Munich *Putsch*, in which Ludendorff and Hitler were acting together, Ward Price, a well known English newspaper correspondent, poked fun at the "old cavalry-charger and this wild mustang".<sup>2</sup> But both lunatics and wild mustangs can be dangerous, and so it proved.

Between 1924 and 1926 Mussolini was finding his feet fairly cautiously. There was one critical moment which threatened the régime when unrest and anger swept throughout the industrial areas of the country after the murder by Fascists of Matteotti, a prominent Socialist deputy, who had protested vigorously against the unconstitutional nature of the 1923 electoral law. Until the revulsion died down Mussolini seemed willing to carry out a more liberal policy than before, but actually, when he felt himself safe, he proceeded to consolidate the Fascist hold on the Government. First he rid himself of the opposition in Parliament; it was expelled in 1926. Two years later an entirely new electoral system was introduced. Deputies in Parliament no longer represented a town or district, but some section of industry, commerce, or the cultural life of the country. A list of 400 candidates was chosen by the Fascist Grand Council (a body, established in 1923, of Mussolini's ministers and other supporters, many of them appointed directly by the Duce) from about three or four times as many names submitted by the various industrial, professional, and cultural Fascist organizations in the country. This list was referred *en bloc* to the electorate for their approval. In theory if it was rejected another list was prepared. In actual practice the list was always voted for, and a Fascist Chamber, with no desire and no power to interfere in the Duce's policy, was elected. The policy of the country was

<sup>1</sup> *The Hundred Years.*

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Hitler the Pawn* by Olden.

decided by the Duce and the Fascist Council. The Chamber had no legislative power; it merely approved of the Budget and sheaves of other Bills already passed by the Council, and often it was asked to confirm a law only after it was in operation.

In 1926 Fascism developed a philosophy. Towards the end of that year Mussolini began to use the term "Corporative State". This, apparently, was a state (reputed to be in process of developing in Italy) in which, through an elaborate structure of syndicates, federations, and corporations, rising to a National Council of Corporations, the whole economic, industrial, and cultural life of the people was to function to the best advantage.<sup>1</sup> There was considerable mystery about the development of this State. Writing in 1934, Spender said: "Mussolini professed to have invented a 'Corporate State', but whether it had any real existence or how it worked was always difficult to ascertain."<sup>2</sup> Various steps in the development of a unified control over industry, &c., can be set down. Soon after he came into power Mussolini abolished the pre-Fascist trade unions, their place being taken by syndicates. In each local trade two syndicates were formed, one of workmen, the other of employers, for the purpose of consultation between the representatives of these two bodies about wages and other conditions of employment. Both strikes and lock-outs were forbidden, and any industrial dispute that could not be settled by those concerned was referred for judgment to an arbiter or to a Labour Court of Appeal. These local syndicates sent delegates to provincial federations, which in turn were represented in national confederations. In 1926 thirteen such confederations were established. Each of the six main branches of the nation's economic life—namely, agriculture, industry, commerce, banking and insurance, sea and air transport, inland transport—was represented in two national confederations, one of employers, the other of workers. The thirteenth confederation was that of the professional classes.

In 1926 a Ministry of Corporations was created. The corporations (they were not in existence in 1926) were intended to be co-ordinating organs between the workers' and the employers' organizations. In March, 1930, a National Council of Corporations was set up. Its membership consists of delegates from the 22 Corporations eventually formed, representing every branch of Italy's

<sup>1</sup> Mussolini emphasized in 1921 that one of the aims of the Fascists was "the gradual disengagement of Italy from the group of the occidental plutocratic nations by the development of our productive forces at home." (*Autobiography*.)

<sup>2</sup> *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth.*

economic and cultural life, and from the syndical confederations of employers and workers. In addition there are specialists on the Council, Government ministers, and the Head of the Government, who acts as President. The Council was intended to have, according to Mussolini (April, 1930) "pre-legislative functions"; actually its activity, in Salvemini's opinion, "has consisted in the giving of advisory opinions on the subjects with which all Labour Councils are occupied", and on "minute bureaucratic questions" which arise in a highly organized totalitarian state.<sup>1</sup> Other writers have emphasized, however, the inroads that this Council has made into Parliament's powers. The sole purpose of this elaborate machinery is to give the Government complete control over every feature of Italian life.<sup>2</sup>

The Fascist State is one in which all liberal-democratic opinion is banned. The Press, broadcasting, and all means of propaganda are rigidly censored. Teachers in schools and universities must be orthodox in the Fascist faith in order to retain their positions. The State takes the child into the Fascist camp at an early age and keeps him (and her) there during adolescence. There are associations for both boys (*Balilla* and *Avanguardisti*) and girls (*Piccole* and *Giovane d'Italia*).

Repression is only one side of the Fascist doctrine. In the matter of positive achievement Mussolini has much to his credit. He carried out extensive schemes of public works—land-reclamation, hydro-electric generating plants, &c. Italy is a country poor in both productive soil and in mineral wealth. "It cannot be denied," wrote G. Cole and M. Cole, "that the Fascist Government, despite the poverty of the national resources, has made very great efforts for the economic development of the country, or that economic progress has been far more substantial under Fascism than it was under the Parliamentary régime."<sup>3</sup>

One successful achievement of Mussolini's was to close the breach (it had lain open since 1870) between the Papacy and the kingdom of Italy. In February, 1929, he concluded a Concordat with Pope Pius XI. The Pope recognized the kingdom of Italy

<sup>1</sup> *Under the Axe of Fascism.*

<sup>2</sup> The Government in Italy consists of: the King; the Head of the Government; the Cabinet; the Fascist Grand Council; the Senate (men of substance, prominent in some phase of public life, and appointed by the king for life, with no power to initiate legislation); the Chamber of Deputies; the National Council of Confederations. It was said in 1939 that the last two were to be merged ultimately into a new Chamber of Fasces and Corporations.

<sup>3</sup> *The Intelligent Man's Review of Europe To-day.*

with Rome as its capital; in return the Italian Government admitted the Pope's sovereignty over the small Vatican state in the heart of Rome. This treaty, while it legalized the position of both Pope and king in Italy, did not prevent discord arising between the Pope and the Fascist leaders. The Pope complained that the Fascist youth organizations were enticing boys from the Catholic Boy Scouts. He accused the Fascists of inculcating hatred, violence, and irreverence among the people. Mussolini's reply was to close youths' clubs run by the Church with social and other activities. Later these were allowed to reopen, but only for religious teaching; the sports and other features which had made them attractive to young men and women were banned.

The Fascist is no believer in pacifism. Mussolini in an article which he contributed to the Italian Encyclopædia wrote:

"Fascism above all does not believe either in the possibility or utility of universal peace. It therefore rejects the pacifism which marks surrender and cowardice. War alone brings all human energies to their highest tension, and imprints a seal of nobility on the peoples who have the virtue to face it. All other tests are but substitutes which never make a man face himself in the alternative of life and death. A doctrine which has its starting-point at this prejudicial postulate of peace is therefore extraneous to Fascism."<sup>1</sup>

In a political programme drawn up in 1921 Mussolini tabulated some of the demands of the Fascists:

"That the treaties of peace be re-examined and modified in parts which are revealed as inapplicable, or the application of which can be a source of hatred and incentive to new wars.

"The economic annexation of Fiume to Italy and the guardianship of Italians living in Dalmatian countries.

"An approach once again toward the nations, Austria, Germany, Bulgaria, Turkey, Hungary, but with dignified attitude, and maintaining the supreme necessities of our north and south boundaries.

"The creation and intensification of friendly relations with all peoples of the Near and Far East, not excluding those which are ruled by the Soviets.

"The indications in colonial policy of the rights and necessities of our nation.

"The building up of Italian colonies in the Mediterranean Sea, as well as those beyond the Atlantic, by economic and cultural institutions and rapid communications."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism* (Hogarth Press), a translation of Mussolini's article.

<sup>2</sup> *My Autobiography*: Mussolini.



His foreign policy was based to a large extent on these early proposals. He made no secret that in time he hoped (if necessary by war) to extend the power of Italy. The fate of Fiume was settled amicably by a treaty with Yugoslavia in 1924, Italy remaining in control of the town. With Albania Italy's relations after the war were at first rather troubled. In 1920 the Allied Powers proposed to give Italy a mandate over Albania, but Italy, finding that her pupil was not likely to be submissive, agreed in August, 1920, to recognize Albania's independence and to evacuate her forces from the country. Yugoslavia wished a revision (to her own advantage) of her frontier with Albania, but the Conference of Ambassadors insisted in 1921 on the retention of the frontier of Albania as it existed in 1913, and passed a resolution declaring that it was Italy's task to maintain, if necessary, Albania's independence. By lavish loans to the Albanian Government Italy obtained virtual control over the country.

It was in the course of delimiting the frontier of Albania in accordance with the Ambassadors' decision of 1921 that an incident occurred which provoked a quarrel between Italy and Greece. This happened shortly after Mussolini had seized power. On 27th August, 1923, four Italians and an Albanian were murdered on the Greek side of the frontier while engaged in the task of delimiting it. Mussolini acted promptly. A squadron of the Italian fleet bombarded the Greek island of Corfu (there were some casualties) and then the Italians effected a landing. Both the League of Nations and the Conference of Ambassadors became entangled in the dispute, but Mussolini peremptorily refused to allow the League to interfere in the matter. Eventually Greece was constrained to pay a sum of 50 million lire to rid herself of the aggressor.

After the Great War relations between Italy and France were not friendly. Italy was not satisfied with what she received as the "equitable" share of African territory promised to her. Britain's contribution was Jubaland, transferred in 1924 from Kenya to Italian Somaliland. This was not unsatisfactory to Italy, but her negotiations with France did not turn out so well, for all that France conceded was a slight rectification of the south-west frontier of Libya. This the Italians claimed was not a surrender of French territory at all, but merely the return to Italy of land which was rightly hers, and which the French had occupied when war began. The position of Italians in the French protectorate of Tunisia, in which the number of Italians exceeded by some 30,000 that of the French

nationals, was another subject of dispute. In 1918 France denounced an agreement which she had signed in 1896 allowing the descendants of Italian residents in Tunisia to retain their Italian nationality. This offended Italy so much that France postponed the carrying out of the measure, but the original agreement was observed only by renewals for periods of three months.

Italy, moreover, looked with suspicious eyes on France's alliances with the members of the Little Entente. Italy herself wished to be the predominant power in the east and south-east of Europe, for it was in these areas that her economic needs could most easily be satisfied. By means of two treaties signed at Tirana in 1926 and 1927 she created a virtual protectorate over Albania. With Greece she made a notable *rapprochement* in 1926. As the champion of treaty-revision she became the protector of Hungary, and (less willingly on the part of the inhabitants) of Austria. In the 'twenties Italy's aim was "to counterbalance the ascendancy of France in the western Mediterranean by an anti-French combination in the east."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34*: Gathorne-Hardy.

## CHAPTER IX

### EXPERIMENT IN DICTATORSHIP: SPAIN

SPAIN in 1919 was still rooted in the traditions of the mediæval age. The spirit of intellectual and social freedom which affected the greater part of Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was unable to penetrate to any great extent the barrier of the Pyrenees. To quote Professor Peers: "Spain, during the nineteenth century, was far too nearly isolated from the rest of Europe for her own well-being. All over the continent ideas were advancing and leaving her behind. From being indifferent to European progress she came to glory in her withdrawal from the current of that progress."<sup>1</sup> No liberalizing influence permeated the Catholic Church,<sup>2</sup> still living as it was in the tradition of the Inquisition and the *auto-da-fé*, or weakened the feudal tyranny of the *grandees*. It was against a background of clericalism and feudal privilege that a democratic movement rose and fell in Spain in the post-war years, preceded first of all, however, by a dictatorship.<sup>3</sup>

Spain in 1919 was a country in which the workers on the soil, comprising more than half the population, were still living in semi-feudal conditions. The fifty thousand owners of large estates (barely one per cent of the rural population) had under their control more than half of the land fit for cultivation. Only forty per cent of the land was actually cultivated, and of this one fourth lay annually fallow.<sup>4</sup> Continually voices were heard in Spain urging the need for agrarian reform; the parcelling out of the great estates, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Spain, the Church and the Orders.*

<sup>2</sup> "But the Church in Spain has still much to learn of discrimination and tolerance; and especially she needs to discriminate between the various senses of the word which she dislikes most of all—the word 'liberalism'." (*Ibid.*)

<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, those of the extreme political Right will deny that the position of the Church and the landowners had much, if anything, to do with the post-war troubles of Spain. In their opinion the causes of the Spanish tragedy were: first, the attempt (fathered by the Radical intellectuals) to continue a pseudo-British system of Parliamentary Government in a country unsuited both geographically and by the temperament of the people for this type of rule; secondly (and more important), the corrupting influence of Soviet propaganda, which spread discontent among an otherwise peaceful population, and stirred up a small unrestrained minority to commit the grossest of outrages.

<sup>4</sup> *Spain in Revolt: Gannes and Repard.*

leasing of the land on reasonable terms of tenure to the peasants. As it was, the majority of the landless workers, and the farmers with a tiny holding, who had to give up a large part of their produce in feudal dues, lived in the direst poverty. More than three-quarters of the small-holders were living in 1925 on less than 1 peseta (or 6d.) a day.<sup>1</sup> In 1929 the agricultural worker earned on an average 3 pesetas a day (a woman's wage was half of this), and as a rule he could depend only on a hundred to two hundred days' work in a year. In Andalusia there were wretched peasants who had neither clothes, food, nor homes. "The hillsides of Seville, which was once a great Royalist city, were honeycombed with holes in the sunbaked soil where the population lived after a fashion all its own."<sup>2</sup> Even in the neighbourhood of Madrid conditions were similar, and a great many families (especially those of agricultural workers) lived in caves in the hillsides.<sup>3</sup>

Equally as important as the agrarian question in the history of the Spanish people was the political influence of the Church. The Catholic Church and the religious orders were the trustees of large sums, had their own powerful Press, and had almost complete control over education in the country. That the Church was not too successful in encouraging the spread of education is shown by this, that in 1930 some 40 per cent of the people could neither read nor write. Note, however, that Professor Peers wrote: "Backward as Spain has long been in education, it is hardly possible to imagine in what condition she would be but for the achievement of the orders."<sup>4</sup> In the province of Barcelona alone 340 schools educating 41,100 pupils were maintained by the religious orders.

In the twentieth century a rapid industrial development took place in Spain, and in the main industrial areas—Catalonia, the Asturias, and the Basque country—a strong workers' movement grew up. In 1919, however, there was little unity among these workers. There were Socialists in Madrid, who had little in common with the Anarchists and Syndicalists of Catalonia. There was a small Communist Party, swearing allegiance to Marx in Barcelona and to Bakunin<sup>5</sup> in Madrid, and many other groups. It was not until

<sup>1</sup> *What is happening in Spain*: Fernando de los Ríos.

<sup>2</sup> *Mediterranean Scene*: Greenwall.

<sup>3</sup> *Spanish Testament*: Koestler.

<sup>4</sup> *Spain, the Church and the Orders*.

<sup>5</sup> Bakunin believed in furthering the Communist cause by more violent means than his contemporary, Marx, approved of, and the two leaders parted company in 1872, when Bakunin was expelled from the Workmen's International Congress at the Hague.

the workers sank their differences and presented a common front that they were able to reach what they considered the first steps to freedom in a democracy. They failed to hold the position they had gained, because the third element in Conservative Spain—the army with its traditional officer caste (about one officer to every seven men), and its military “juntas”—rebelled, with the backing of the Church and the landowners, to crush a spirit which threatened their ancient privileges and their predominant status.<sup>1</sup>

In 1919 there were three forces actively working against the repressive traditionalism of Spain. These were: the Liberal middle classes and the intellectuals, with such men as Miguel Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset as their spokesmen; the various organized Labour groups; and the Separatists, especially of Catalonia and the Basque country, who wished regional autonomy for their peoples, if not sovereign independence. It was against the monarchy, in the person of Alfonso XIII (ruling since 1902), and his inefficient and corrupt Governments, that the resentment of these rebels was directed.

During the Great War Spain remained neutral and enjoyed a period of prosperity by supplying both sets of belligerents. To meet the demands of the moment there was a great expansion of industry, and this tended to upset the social balance of the country. With this increased industrialization went unrest among the workers, who demanded an adequate share in the war-profits. Strikes were frequent, a particularly serious one breaking out in Catalonia in 1917. When the war ended, Spain did not escape from the slump which followed, and labour unrest became even more general than before. Republican agitation increased and grew more vocal. The Government was unstable; between 22nd March, 1918, and 13th September, 1923, twelve different Cabinets were in power.

Alfonso was too intelligent not to realize that his position as monarch was becoming critical, and, as a diversion to gain some popularity for the throne, he planned an offensive against Abd-el-Krim, the leader of a band of rebel tribesmen of the Riff Mountains in Morocco. Alfonso himself took an active part in the preparations for the campaign. It was by his wish that a subordinate general, Silvestre, was given the command in preference to officers of superior rank. The expedition was a complete failure. In July, 1921, the Spanish force met that of the rebels at Anual and was decisively

<sup>1</sup> Political opinion of the Right justified the army rising as the only means of crushing the Communist influence (alleged to be all-powerful among the workers) which threatened to plunge the whole of Spain into anarchy.

routed. Ten thousand Spaniards were killed, and fifteen thousand taken prisoner. Such a tragedy and so disastrous a defeat could not but evoke widespread indignation. A Committee of Inquiry was set up to investigate the affair, but its report, ready in the summer of 1922, was suppressed. Nevertheless, there were well-founded rumours that the committee had seen reason to blame the king himself, partly at least, for the disaster. The Riff campaign, so far from bringing to the monarch some measure of popularity, did exactly the opposite. Alfonso saw one means of saving his throne—the setting-up of a dictatorship to act as a buffer between himself and the indignation of the people. He prepared the way by forcing the resignation of Alcalá Zamora, his civilian Minister of War, and refusing to allow the Cortes to meet. Then the way was open for Primo de Rivera, a Captain-General of Catalonia, to seize the reins of government, and with Alfonso's acquiescence de Rivera was proclaimed dictator on 13th September, 1923.

The military dictatorship, it was said at the time, was to last but a brief, definite period, but this period was repeatedly extended, and actually the dictatorship continued for six years and four months. Probably in the beginning it was welcomed by the majority of the people.<sup>1</sup> Primo de Rivera satisfied the industrialists of Barcelona by his suppression of the Anarchist elements there. (The Anarchists were strong in Catalonia. They believed that, man being innately good, it was only authority and government which brought evil and misery into social life; and, in naïve obedience to this gospel, they murdered those in authority. In Barcelona alone, in 1922–23, 160 employers were assassinated.)<sup>2</sup> Primo de Rivera was a benevolent Andalusian, ostentatious (he was fond of parades), generous in promises, and at times impulsive and imprudent. He gained great kudos and popularity by organizing a successful campaign, in alliance with the French, against Abd-el-Krim. The brunt of the fighting was borne by the French, but the surrender of the rebel chief in 1926 salved the wounded military pride of the Spaniards and avenged the disaster of Anual.

That Primo de Rivera had no intention of altering fundamentally the structure of the state was shown by his slogan of "Fatherland, Monarchy, Religion". To help the industrial and commercial interests in the country he raised a high tariff wall around Spain. He imposed some measure of State control over industry, and embarked on an extensive policy of public works. The material benefits

<sup>1</sup> *The Spanish Tragedy*: Peers.

<sup>2</sup> *The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.

of the dictatorship were considerable: 4000 schools were built, roads were constructed, and irrigation schemes completed. Taxation incidentally increased, and the value of the peseta dropped. On the other hand, the dictatorship was no different from that of other countries in its repression of unfriendly critics. The Cortes was suspended, a censorship of the Press instituted, and Liberal leaders, such as Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset, exiled. Many of the changes which Primo de Rivera effected were unpopular, the Supreme National Assembly, for example, which he convened in September, 1927 (it was a pseudo-Parliament, with only advisory powers), and the *Unión Patriótica*, a band of supporters of the régime, rather like the Fascist Party of Italy.

After a few years of Primo de Rivera's rule the people as a whole lost faith in the dictator. The Catalan Nationalists opposed him because he forbade the teaching of their language in schools and regarded them as lawless and revolutionary agitators of the same type as Anarchists or Communists. Even the army withdrew its confidence in Spain's leader, and at the end only the Church remained the ardent supporter of the dictatorship. In 1929, a year of very severe economic distress in Spain, the régime neared its end. Primo de Rivera made one last effort to save the situation by appealing to the army officers who had set him up. "You have stayed too long," they said. On 28th January, 1930, Alfonso asked Primo de Rivera for his resignation, and the dictator complied.<sup>1</sup> The king, although he announced that the old constitution was restored, hoped to continue some measure of dictatorship with another leader in command. He appointed a former War Minister, General Dámaso Berenguer, as head of the state, but by the summer the vacillating rule of Berenguer and his ministers, with the government carried on by royal decrees, had become so unpopular that Socialists, Republicans, Catalan Separatists, and other revolutionary groups were eager for joint action to upturn the dictatorship. A *coup d'état* was planned by the army and the revolutionaries, but there was some hesitation in the ranks. A premature rising in the Jaca garrison, led by Captain Fermín Galán and Captain Gracia Hernández, was crushed, and the officers executed. Galán had hoped to force the hand of the civilian Republican leaders, whose sincerity he distrusted. At his trial, when he was asked who his accomplices were, he made the bitter reply: "Yourselves, cowards!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Primo de Rivera retired to Paris, and died suddenly on 16th March, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> *Spain in Revolt*: Gannes and Repard.

The rising had been timed for 15th December (the Jaca revolt occurred three days earlier) but when the day came the army made no move. Nor did the proposed general strike take place in Madrid. The republican spirit, however, was not dead. Strikes broke out throughout the country, and fights between Republican supporters and Government troops occurred. Most of the Republican leaders were arrested and imprisoned in Madrid. They did not remain idle, but formed themselves into a Revolutionary Committee and drew up a programme. The feeling of the country was so strong in their favour that the Government felt it needful to negotiate with them, and they were released. It was announced that elections for a new Cortes would be held in March, 1931, but again difficulties arose between the king and the Liberal-Republican leaders, and the elections were cancelled. The Berenguer Government was discredited, and in February, 1931, Alfonso replaced it by another of the same type with an admiral, Juan Aznar, at its head. This administration remained in office less than two months.

In April municipal elections were held throughout Spain, and both sides realized the importance of these. The issue was: Monarchy versus Republic. The first results, those of the towns, showed a substantial victory for the Republicans. Actually, in the rural areas the Monarchists more than held their own, and the final results gave a majority of seats for the king in the country as a whole. But before this was known, Alfonso was persuaded to yield to the strong republican spirit shown in the boroughs. The army was hostile to the dictatorship, and General Sanjurjo, Commander of the Civil Guard, could give the king no assurance that the troops would remain loyal. Alfonso refused to abdicate or give up his rights, but on 14th April he left Madrid for Carthage, and on the following day took ship for Marseilles. On the same day as the king sailed from Spain, a Provisional Republican Cabinet was formed, with Alcalá Zamora at its head. The Republic was set up without bloodshed, for the Monarchists offered no resistance. There were attacks by unruly bands of people on church buildings, some 200 of which were burned and gutted.<sup>1</sup> No priest was killed, and "the only casualty recorded in the establishment of the Republic was a Jesuit father who hurt himself jumping out of a window".<sup>2</sup>

A general election held in June, 1931, gave the Republican parties an overwhelming majority in the Cortes. This body met on

<sup>1</sup> *The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.

<sup>2</sup> *Spain in Revolt*: Gannes and Repard.



29th June, and proceeded to draw up a constitution for the Republic. This was adopted in December, 1931. The constitution began with a declaration that Spain was a democratic Republic of workers of all classes. The Church and the State were declared separated, and freedom of religion guaranteed to the people. Freedom of speech, of the Press, and of meeting were also assured. One article of the constitution recorded a renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy. The legislative power of the new Republic was vested in a freely elected Cortes of one Chamber. The President, elected for a term of six years, had a limited right of veto, but little real power in the Government.

The chief members of the Provisional Cabinet which had set up the Republic were men destined to play an important part in the history of Spain during the next few years. Their names were: Alcalá Zamora (Prime Minister), Alejandro Lerroux (Foreign Affairs), Fernando de los Ríos (Justice), Miguel Maura (Home Affairs), Indalecio Prieto (Finance), Manuel Azaña (War), Francisco Largo Caballero (Labour), Diego Martínez Barrios (Economy).

## CHAPTER X

### EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

IT was in the Danubian Basin that the explosive effect of the World War caused the greatest destruction. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, with its 55 million inhabitants of diverse race, was completely broken up, and Austria, the core of the Empire and the centre of its financial, economic, and cultural life, became a small land-locked state with a population of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  million. Hungary, the other main fragment of the old Empire, was also left high and dry in economic isolation. Gathorne-Hardy vividly compared the new states which were carved from the Habsburg Empire to "the jaws of a hungry dog closing upon an already well-gnawed cutlet, which is following another morsel down the animal's throat; the cutlet represents the meagre remains of Austria, Hungary is the meat already swallowed, the upper and lower jaws are respectively Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, while the muscles which work them are comprised in Rumania".<sup>1</sup> What had been in pre-war days a complex economic unit, the industrial and manufacturing area of Bohemia well balanced by the rich agricultural lands of Hungary, with an intricate railway system and a coherent local administration, was now resolved into its individual parts. With the breaking up of this customs-free area, and the imposition of tariff barriers by the new national states, the Danubian Basin suffered even greater economic hardships than those which were the normal outcome of the war.

#### AUSTRIA

The country which suffered most was Austria, where a republic was declared on 12th November, 1918. She was a country poor in natural resources and burdened, moreover, with the old Imperial capital (housing over two million of the small population), and with an elaborate bureaucracy designed to serve the old Empire, and ridiculously disproportionate to the needs of the new state. Econo-

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34.*

mically her position as a result of the Treaty of St. Germain was hopeless. This was soon apparent to the Allies, who realized that it was necessary to give financial help to Austria if she was to survive as an independent state and not become the centre of anarchy in South Europe. The first Chancellor of the Republic was Dr. Renner, leader of the Social Democratic Party, who managed to form a Coalition Government with the temporary support of the Catholic Christian Social Party, the other large organized group in the country. This union did not last long, for the cleavage between the two parties was wide.

The Social Democrats' stronghold was Vienna, where they initiated far-reaching and very successful measures of social reform. The workers' flats which were built in the capital, for example, became a model for all progressive municipalities in Europe. The Christian Social Party, comprising the middle classes and the urban population, was conservative in outlook and jealous of the wealth of Vienna, which allowed the municipality to carry out its lavish social schemes, while in the provinces there was general poverty. The Social Democrats could claim but minority support throughout the whole country, but year after year they had a majority in Vienna, and the local administration remained in their hands. The antagonism existing between the Christian Social Party and the Social Democrats was a dominant influence in Austria's internal politics during the greater part of her existence as a republic.

In the winter of 1919-20 the people of Austria were literally starving, and the Allies were constrained, by motives both of sympathy and self-interest, to go to her aid. In April, 1920, an International Relief Committee was formed (neutrals gave it their support) to deal with this pressing problem, and "Relief Credits" were arranged by this committee for Austria. But by the summer of 1921 it became clear that the Republic's economic difficulties could not be solved merely by the doling out piecemeal of charitable contributions, and that the whole financial basis of the state would require reconstruction. Austria, moreover, would need a large foreign loan in order to set her on her feet. Dr. Seipel, a Catholic priest and leader of the Christian Social Party, made a tour of European capitals in 1922 (he was appointed Chancellor in that year) in order to convince the Allied and other statesmen of Austria's plight. In the autumn he attended a meeting of the Council of the League of Nations at Geneva to urge the need for help. His plea was successful. The Financial Committee of the League drew up a complete

scheme of reconstruction for Austria, which was adopted in 1922. France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and Britain were the guarantors of credits, but the scheme was to be carried out under the auspices of the League, with the proviso that Austria's finances should be supervised by a League Commissioner General and a Committee of Control representing the guaranteeing powers. Austria accepted the conditions, although Dr. Seipel had some difficulty with the Social Democrats in Parliament before the necessary legislation was passed, for the Government's opponents protested that the country was being sold into bondage. As the price of this help Austria promised to preserve her independence, an Allied demand which was part of the peace settlement of 1919. With no difficulty the necessary loans were floated in European countries, and the problem of Austria was safely left in the hands of the League. The League's control over her finances came to an end in 1926. Although her immediate difficulties were removed, Austria's economic condition was not too stable in the 'twenties. She depended for her livelihood on the import of raw materials and the export of manufactured goods, and the tariff barriers erected by her neighbours hindered an easy flow of trade. She was successful, however, in concluding trade agreements with Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Hungary. Periodically there arose a mild outcry in Austria for an *Anschluss* with Germany, which would have been a means of restoring economic prosperity, but the Allies resolutely set themselves against this union.

## HUNGARY

As the Great War neared its close, the Magyars of Hungary realized that, in order to save their state, they must break from the dissolving Habsburg Empire. Towards the end of October, 1918, a National Council was formed with Count Michael Karolyi as President, and on 16th November, 1918, a few days after the abdication of Charles I, the last Habsburg ruler, this council declared Hungary an independent republic. The country by this time was in a state of anarchy, with Czechs, Rumanians, and Serbs seizing what frontier territories they could. In the winter of 1918-19 Karolyi (appointed President of the Republic in January, 1919) was faced not only with humiliating attacks on Hungarian territory by the races which had but a brief time before been subject to Magyar rule, but also by serious Bolshevik agitation among his own people. On 20th March, 1919, it was announced that the Allies had consented to the occu-

pation by Rumanians of a considerable tract of purely Hungarian land (some 2000 square miles). The occupation was said to be only temporary, but Karolyi considered it the prelude to annexation, and resigned office.

A second revolution now took place, which placed the Communists in power, with Bela Kun as their leader. The Communists were militant and eager to resist the encroachment on Hungarian territory by the apparently insatiable victors of the war. They started fighting on two fronts, against the Rumanians and the Czechs. Meanwhile the Soviet Government in Budapest instituted a Red Terror against its opponents at the same time as it devised far-reaching schemes of social reform. But the Revolution could not withstand both the passive opposition of the peasants and other anti-Bolsheviks, and the intervention of Hungary's foreign enemies. The Rumanians beat down the resistance of the Bolshevik forces opposed to them and, advancing into the country, made for the capital. In the beginning of August the Soviet experiment was at an end, and Bela Kun in exile.<sup>1</sup>

On 4th August, 1919, a Rumanian army entered Budapest. For three and a half months it remained there and the Hungarian people, who had just been freed from the Red Terror, were now subjected to that of Rumanian looters and murderers. With the departure of the Rumanians in November (they had to be pressed by the Allies to withdraw) the Conservatives in Hungary gained control. The troubles of the populace were not over. The reactionary leaders, Admiral Horthy, Commander of the Austrian Fleet in the Great War, and General Goemboes, instituted in their turn a White Terror (during which it was the fate particularly of the Jews to suffer) to crush opposition to their rule. They were successful. In 1920 a National Constituent Assembly was elected. It declared that Hungary was still a monarchy, although without a king at the moment, and that the position of Regent would be held by Admiral Horthy.

Twice in 1921 the Archduke Charles attempted to regain his throne. In March the pretender appeared in Budapest, but obeyed an Allied demand and withdrew to Switzerland. Later in the year he reappeared in Hungary, this time prepared to carry out a military coup. He was joined by some troops, but his march to Budapest was opposed, and after being defeated by a detachment of Govern-

<sup>1</sup> Bela Kun, a Jewish notary, was a personal friend of Lenin's, and entirely subservient to him and Trotsky. After his flight from Rumania he lived mainly in Russia.

ment forces he was arrested. Conveyed to Madeira, he died there in 1922. These attempts by the ex-king to recover his throne created alarm in the succession states. The Governments of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia issued orders for mobilization, and were prepared to make an active move had Charles been successful in his coup. In April, 1921, Count Bethlen was appointed Prime Minister (he remained in office until 1931), and under his rule and that of Admiral Horthy the feudal régime of pre-war Hungary was virtually re-established.

After the Great War Hungary was, economically, in as bad a way as Austria, but materially she was more rich in resources to help her to recover ultimately. She was resentful of the conditions imposed on her by the Treaty of Trianon, and made no secret of her determination to demand frontier revision if an opportunity arose. Hungary, like Austria, needed help from the Allies in order to rebuild the economic foundations of the state. In 1923 the Financial Committee of the League drew up a reconstruction scheme for Hungary, and in European countries in the following year a loan of 12 million pounds was successfully floated, under the auspices of the League, to carry out this scheme.

### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The independence of Czechoslovakia was recognized at the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919. It was a composite state, formed by the union of Moravia, Bohemia, and Austrian Silesia (these were the historic territories of the Bohemian Crown), Slovakia, and Carpathian Ruthenia. The makers of Czechoslovakia, and the two men who guided its destiny for many years, were Thomas Masaryk (President 1919-35), and Eduard Benes (Foreign Minister 1919-35). A democratic constitution was adopted on 29th February, 1920, and Czechoslovakia remained, until its dissolution, a centre of democratic influence in Eastern Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Economically Czechoslovakia was in a very sound position. She exported on a large scale both coal and the products of her well-organized engineering and textile works. She developed also a considerable export trade in glass, porcelain, and other light industrial products. She combined "a high degree of self-sufficiency

<sup>1</sup> "She alone was not transformed from an oppressed into an oppressive nation. She alone combined national independence with social justice at home." (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 20th December, 1935.)

in the matter of supplies with a manufacturing equipment designed essentially for a wide export market',<sup>1</sup> and, like Britain, she advocated during the 'twenties the removal of barriers which hindered the easy flow of international trade.

The immediate internal problems which the Czech Government faced in 1919, such as the shortage of trained officials and of army officers, were speedily overcome. Social legislation was in the forefront of the democratic Government's programme. In Slovakia and in Ruthenia, both backward countries, a network of schools with Slovak, Russian, or German as the language in use, was built up. Sickness benefits, old-age pensions, and the breaking up of large estates into peasant holdings were among the measures of social reform adopted in Czechoslovakia.

These, and other successful results of the Czech administration, were emphasized by Dr. Kamil Krofta,<sup>2</sup> whom Masaryk called "one of the foremost living historians of Czechoslovakia". But other writers gave a less happy picture of the new state's internal progress, and insisted, in particular, that the promises made by the Czechs to treat their minorities<sup>3</sup> as equals were not fulfilled. A promise of autonomy, for example, was given to the Ruthenians in 1919, but this was not carried out, although a limited measure of local autonomy was granted in 1927. In 1919, also, Dr. Benes submitted to the Allies a memorandum informing them of the liberal policy which the Czechs intended to follow in their relations with the other peoples in the state. Among the proposals set down in the memorandum were these: a form of federal Government (rather like that of Switzerland) was to be instituted; State schools for all nationalities were to be established throughout the country; public offices were to be thrown open to all without favour; and Germans were to have the right to plead before the highest courts in their own language. But these promises, it was said, were not kept. That the

<sup>1</sup> *The Intelligent Man's Review of Europe To-day*: Cole and Cole.

<sup>2</sup> *Short History of Czechoslovakia*.

<sup>3</sup> According to the census of 1921 the population of Czechoslovakia was:

Czechoslovaks (of these about 25 per cent were Slovaks)	8,761,834
Germans .. .. .	3,122,892
Magyars .. .. .	746,809
Ruthenes .. .. .	459,349
Jews .. .. .	180,337
Poles .. .. .	75,705
Others .. .. .	266,246
Total	13,613,172

relations between the Czechs and the minorities were not entirely friendly is suggested by this, that between 1920 and 1930 twenty-two complaints were addressed by the Sudeten Germans to the League of Nations, and a dozen or so by the Ruthenian and other national groups.

#### RUMANIA

During the Great War Rumania was defeated by Germany and forced to make peace in May, 1918. On 9th November, however, she redeclared war against the enemy, and was able, therefore, to be represented at the Peace Conference in Paris and to claim her share of the Habsburg Empire. The area of the country was more than doubled by the acquisition of Transylvania, Bukovina, a part of the Banat, and Bessarabia.

After 1919 the Government of Rumania tended to run on dictatorial lines. The only pre-war party which retained its influence was the Liberals. Under Ion Bratianu, the Liberals exercised autocratic control between 1921 and 1926, with the opposition parties frequently boycotting Parliament, and periodical risings of Communists taking place in Bessarabia. In 1926 a revolutionary electoral law was passed by the Liberals to weaken the influence of minority groups in Parliament. It enacted that the party which gained 40 per cent of the electors' votes should be given half the seats in Parliament in addition to a proportion of the other half commensurate with its success at the polls. This measure virtually meant that the Government in power at the time of an election, and having control of the electoral machine, would be sure of retaining its hold on the country. The Crown had the right to dismiss a ministry, and under this new law now became very powerful; for, just before the election, the king could install a new administration which he favoured, knowing that this party would then be successful at the polls. This happened immediately after the passing of the electoral law. King Ferdinand dismissed the Liberals, and put in their place a Conservative ministry. At the polls the Conservatives won the necessary 40 per cent, and the influence of the Liberals (undone by their own legislation) was for a time destroyed. They were back in office, however, shortly afterwards, but only for a brief spell. Their power was finally broken in 1927, when the king summoned Dr. Maniu, the peasant leader, to form a Government. With some slight interruptions the peasant party maintained their power until 1931.



Prince Carol, son of King Ferdinand,<sup>1</sup> renounced his right to the throne in 1926, and when Ferdinand died a year later his grandson, Michael, became king. But in June, 1930, Carol, despite his renunciation, returned to Rumania and gained the throne with military support. Virtually he made himself a dictator in 1931.

### YUGOSLAVIA

The kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, proclaimed in December, 1918, was formed of Serbia (the core of the state), the Slovenic provinces of Austria-Hungary, and the kingdom of Montenegro. In addition, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Albanian, Magyar, and Rumanian minorities were included within the frontiers. The Serbs wished to rule the country from Belgrade, with a centralized administration that would give them complete authority over the subordinate Croats and Slovenes. This attempt at domination was bitterly resented, particularly by the Croats. The old Austro-Hungarian provinces demanded a considerable measure of local autonomy, and this the Serbs refused to grant. Racial antagonism was intensified by differences in religion. The Serbs belong to the Orthodox Church, while the Croats are Catholic, and there are both Moslem and Protestant groups among the minorities.

In 1921 the Serbs drew up a new constitution which satisfied their desire for a centralized Government. Thereafter the main political *motif* in the kingdom's internal affairs was the hostility between Croats and Serbs. The Croatian Peasant Party, whose leader was Radic, boycotted the Assembly at first, but in 1924 it accepted the constitution and allowed its deputies to take their seats. Croats joined a Serbian ministry, but disturbances between the Serbs and the non-Serbs were frequent in the Assembly, and these culminated in 1928 in an attack by a fanatical Serb deputy who shot Radic and two other Croatians.

The political scene remained one of confusion until 1929, when King Alexander, abrogating the 1921 Constitution, formed what was in effect a dictatorship, and changed the name of the kingdom to Yugoslavia. The old political parties were suppressed. A new constitution, apparently still of a democratic kind, was adopted in 1931, but by electoral restrictions no merely local party had any opportunity of being represented in Parliament. "No candidate,"

<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand succeeded to the throne of Rumania in October, 1914.

wrote G. D. H. Cole and M. Cole,<sup>1</sup> "is allowed to stand for election unless his name is entered on a national list, and no list is admitted to be valid unless it includes a representative nominated from every electoral division in the country. It follows that no group formed upon a regional basis—e.g. no purely Croatian party—can nominate a candidate at all, unless it can coalesce to form a list with other regional groups in every division—virtually an impossible condition." In 1931 only one list submitted complied with the constitution, and this group of candidates was accordingly elected. It formed itself into a Yugoslav Party, with no opposition in Parliament. Actually the king controlled the Government. In 1931 discontent was widespread among the Croats, and as there was no constitutional means by which their grievances could be remedied, it seemed that at any time there might be an outbreak of rebellion.

#### BULGARIA

Boris III, Tsar of Bulgaria, who succeeded to the throne in October, 1918, on the abdication of his father, Ferdinand, ruled as a constitutional monarch. But after the Great War Bulgaria was the scene of political feuds and attempts at dictatorship. The main question which excited interest was that of the land. An Agrarian Party, whose leader was Stambuliski, gained power in 1920, and carried out measures to divide Church and Crown lands among the peasants. In 1923 the Conservatives overthrew this Government (Stambuliski himself was killed), and became all-powerful. The new Tsankov Government attempted to crush the unrest which was widespread in the country. There were at times conditions of anarchy: in 1924, for example, there occurred 200 assassinations, and in 1925 a bomb exploded in the cathedral at Sofia causing the death of 210 people and the wounding of some 600. The Government did its utmost to suppress Socialist and Communist groups. In 1926 the Conservatives fell, and a ministry with a democratic basis, under Liabtchev, was formed. The introduction of proportional representation for Parliamentary elections tended to increase the number of parties, and towards the end of the 'twenties made government by coalitions necessary.

<sup>1</sup> *The Intelligent Man's Review of Europe To-day.*

## GREECE

After the defeat of the Greeks by the Turks in Smyrna,<sup>1</sup> King Constantine abdicated for the second time in September, 1922. His successor, George II, did not rule long; he was forced into exile in 1923, and a republic declared in Greece in March, 1924. From 1925 until ten years later, when George was recalled to the throne, democratic government was supposed to exist in Greece, but actually the political scene was dominated by various personalities, the most important being Venizelos who was in power between 1928 and 1932.

## POLAND

In 1921 Marshal Pilsudski, the man who had stood in the van in the struggle for Polish independence, gave up his position as Chief of the State owing to disagreement with his colleagues, and two years later resigned from his command of the army. The constitution which the new state adopted had particularly intricate machinery to control the activities of Parliament. Moreover, proportional representation was introduced, and this so enlarged the number of parties that no strong individual Government could be formed but only unstable coalitions. It was to break down the obstacles to good government that Pilsudski carried out a military coup in 1926 and made himself virtually dictator. He was Prime Minister in 1926-28, and again for a short time in 1930.<sup>2</sup> Various changes were made in the constitution. Poland was neither a democracy nor an entirely totalitarian state. While civil liberties were considerably curtailed, and one party, with army support, controlled the Government, the opposition was allowed to express its opinions in its own newspapers and to carry out a certain amount of propaganda.

During the Great War Poland was devastated by the hostile armies of Russians and Germans which fought within her frontiers. Extensive tracts of land were put out of use, and millions of buildings destroyed. The task of material reconstruction was one that demanded great sacrifice from the people, particularly as Poland is predominantly a country of poor peasants, but it was successfully carried out. Moreover, a united Poland was faced in the early days of her new life by the problem of cohering three different systems

<sup>1</sup> See page 34.    <sup>2</sup> Pilsudski died in May, 1935.

of law, social legislation, and public administration, the relics of the tripartite rule of Germany, Austria, and Russia, and by the need to institute a stable currency throughout the country. All this was satisfactorily accomplished.

The relations between Danzig and Poland were not too harmonious after the war. The Polish Government was dissatisfied with the decision to place Danzig under the administration of the League of Nations, and would have preferred to incorporate the territory into Poland proper. The Poles built on the Baltic shore a new port, Gdynia, which diverted from Danzig a large part of her trade.

The Poles' treatment of the minorities in the state was neither sympathetic nor entirely just. In particular the Ukrainians suffered. A promise, made by Pilsudski to the Allies in 1923, to grant autonomy to Polish Ukraine was not fulfilled; on the contrary, repressive measures—the closing of national schools, for example—were carried out. In Galicia in 1912 there were 2420 Ukrainian schools; in 1928 the number was only 745.<sup>1</sup>

#### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

After the Great War the matter of foreign policy divided the countries in the east and south-east of Europe into two hostile groups. On the one hand, the succession states, and those which had gained territory as a result of the war, were determined to uphold the peace settlement and to resist any suggestion of frontier revision. Those states, on the other hand, which had lost territory when peace was made, were anxious to regain part if not all that the victors had secured. In the first group were Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Greece, and Poland; in the second, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

To maintain the post-war *status quo* the little Entente was formed, mainly owing to the efforts of Dr. Benes, Czechoslovakia's Foreign Minister. This was a firm alliance<sup>2</sup> between Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania, arranged in 1920–21, and directed mainly against Hungary, for it was Hungary's demand for treaty-revision

<sup>1</sup> *The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.

<sup>2</sup> The treaties were:

Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, 14th August, 1920;  
Rumania and Czechoslovakia, 23rd April, 1921;  
Yugoslavia and Rumania, 7th June, 1921.

that threatened the security of these states. In October, 1921, the Entente threw its weight against the restoration of the Archduke Charles to the Hungarian throne. Even when Charles was safely out of Europe, Dr. Benes was not content. He threatened military action unless the Hungarian Government bound itself legally to exclude the Habsburgs from the throne. He claimed also the payment of expenses incurred by the mobilization of his and his allies' troops. This second demand was not complied with, and was dropped, but Benes won his main point. The Hungarian Government passed legislation to exclude the Habsburgs from the throne, and pledged itself to elect no ruler without the approval of the Council of Ambassadors.

In 1922 the Little Entente supported Hungary's entry into the League of Nations, thereby binding the Hungarian Government not to resort to war to remedy any of her grievances unless arbitration failed to effect a settlement. In 1924 the Entente gave its help to the League in the arrangements made for Hungarian reconstruction. With Hungary bound, by this scheme, to be of good behaviour, the members of the Little Entente were relieved to some extent of fear of their neighbour, and other lines of their individual foreign policy became clearer.

Czechoslovakia's position made her a bulwark against German aggression towards the south-east. It was natural therefore that she (like Poland) should bind herself to France, and an alliance between France and Czechoslovakia was concluded on 25th January, 1924. With the other members of the Little Entente France was not immediately able to secure definite treaties. Rumania at the moment was more interested in her relations with Russia, Bessarabia being a bone of contention between the two, and Yugoslavia in her relations with Italy, for both she and Italy shared the Adriatic and were jealous of each other's influence. The question of Fiume, still in 1924 illegally in Italian hands, was one that had to be settled before any *rapprochement* between Yugoslavia and Italy was possible, but finally, on 27th January, 1924, a "Pact of Friendship and Cordial Collaboration" was signed between the two countries, Yugoslavia giving up her claim to Fiume.

In the 'twenties Italy considered that the Balkan Peninsula and the Danubian Basin were areas reserved for Italian economic control and as Italian spheres of influence. "The lines for the pacific expansion of Italy," said Mussolini in 1924, "lie towards the east." He strove to cultivate the friendship of the Little Entente, and in

this respect became the rival of France. The members of the Entente were prepared on their side to deal with both powers impartially. While they had no desire to be "protected" solely by one of the Great Powers, each was willing to make treaties of friendship with all of them if necessary, seeing in a multiplicity of connections a guarantee against the attack or the peaceful penetration of any one. Czechoslovakia, for example, after concluding a treaty with France in January, 1924, signed a treaty of friendship with Italy in July of the same year. Yugoslavia had her pact of friendship with Italy, and also accepted from France a loan (in the form of munitions) of 300 million francs.

The third member of the Little Entente remained to be wooed. In 1926 Rumania concluded treaties both with France and Italy. In the same year France completed her system of alliances with the Little Entente by concluding a treaty with Yugoslavia. Mussolini sought the favour of the other Balkan states, and was successful in 1928 in signing pacts with Turkey and Greece. His endeavour (he made no concealment of it) was to build up a pro-Italian *bloc* in the eastern Mediterranean to counterbalance France's influence in the west.

Poland's geographical position made her foreign policy a matter of great delicacy. She was a buffer state between Germany and Russia, and had no desire to see either of these countries too keenly interested in her welfare. Neither had cordial feelings towards Poland, for in the east Poland had a large Russian minority, incorporated into the state after Pilsudski's successful campaign in 1920, and in the west Germany was not reconciled to the loss of part of Upper Silesia, or the Corridor, or Danzig. It was mainly to France that in the 'twenties Poland looked for support to prevent her powerful neighbours from attacking her. She concluded alliances with France (February, 1921) and Rumania (March, 1921). Rumania, like Poland, faced danger from Russia, for she had seized Bessarabia in 1919, and the loss of this Russian province was not recognized by the Soviet Government, although it had pledged itself not to attempt to regain the territory by force of arms.

Greece's relations with her neighbours were strained at times after the Great War. The Italian control of Albania was not regarded with favour by the Greeks, who, moreover, after the Corfu incident, had more solid grounds for their hostility towards Italy. It was not until 1926 that there was an easing of this tension. Greece won a notable diplomatic victory in 1930 when she concluded with Turkey

a comprehensive treaty covering all the most important matters that affected both countries. But with Bulgaria, another of her war-time enemies, Greece remained unfriendly. By the Treaty of Neuilly Bulgaria lost her southern territory that bordered the Ægean, and was left with only her Black Sea coast-line, which at any time might be rendered useless to her by the closing of the Dardanelles. She was promised by the peace settlement an "economic" outlet to the Ægean Sea, but this in practice was merely "a preferential concession in the Greek port of Salonika".<sup>1</sup> To Yugoslavia, also, Bulgaria was hostile; this enemy had seized her Macedonian territory, the population of which lived discontented and rebellious under Serb rule.

<sup>1</sup> *Is It Peace?* Graham Hutton.

## CHAPTER XI

### NATIONALISM: IRELAND

THE Irish Nationalists, whose activity poisoned relations between Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century, gained with the passing into law of a Home Rule Bill for Ireland in 1914 what might be accounted a victory. Actually the Bill seemed likely to be a spark to set Ireland blazing in a religious civil war, for the Protestants of Ulster were determined to resist subjection to the Roman Catholic majority in Southern Ireland. But the Home Rule Act remained merely in the statute-book, a reminder to Britain afterwards that concessions she made to Irish nationalist feeling invariably came too late. Its operation was postponed when the Great War broke out—British statesmen conveniently shelved the troublesome Irish question, and the British public forgot in the agony of Ypres and the Somme that Ireland was still seething with discontent.

The impatience of the Irish broke out in the Easter rebellion of 1916, which was suppressed only after five days of murderous fighting in the streets of Dublin and at a loss of 450 lives. Fifteen of the leaders were executed. Another, condemned also to death, was reprieved because he was an American citizen at the time. This was Eamon de Valera, born in New York in 1882, child of a Spanish father and an Irish mother. The severity with which the rebellion was crushed changed the mood of the discontented Irish. They were no longer tolerant of half-measures, and the nationalist movement became definitely republican under the name of Sinn Fein (Our-selves Alone). De Valera, serving a term of imprisonment in Britain at the time, was elected the first president of Sinn Fein, with Arthur Griffith as his vice-president. In 1917 de Valera was released under a general amnesty, and returned to Ireland to urge his followers to greater activity than before. In May, 1918, he was again arrested, and lodged in Lincoln Jail, but he effected his escape in February, 1919, and slipped over to the U.S.A. There he lectured in the cause of Irish Republicanism, and collected funds for the continuance of the campaign against Britain. In the same year he



returned to Ireland, where a Republican Government had been set up. This followed the general election held in December, 1918, when seventy-three uncompromising Republicans were returned by Irish constituencies. They refused to take their seats at Westminster, and, proclaiming a republic in Ireland, they formed themselves into an independent Parliament, the first Dáil Eireann. The British Government, challenged by this open defiance of its authority, had to take action.

The Republican leaders hoped that President Wilson of the U.S.A. would support their claim to self-determination, and in a private interview in June, 1919, they reminded him of his insistence on the principle that every people of the world had the right to determine its own destiny. The President's reply was not helpful: "When I gave utterance to these words, I said them without the knowledge that nationalities existed, which are coming to us day by day."<sup>1</sup> The Irish knew that there was no hope of getting Wilson's help, and that their only resort lay in war. Then started in earnest the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-21.

It was a war of ambushes, midnight raids, surprise attacks, the looting and burning of houses. General Macready had under his command British troops to the number of some 60,000. Against these the enemy flung their two thousand or so experienced gunmen, the storm troopers in the Republican cause; behind these in support were the civilian volunteers, ready to take part in any local foray. The exploits of such men as Michael Collins,<sup>2</sup> the hero of the gunmen, and the fearlessness with which they moved about under the eyes of the enemy, became legendary. The Royal Irish Constabulary was the object of the first attacks of the Republicans. Between December, 1918, and December, 1920, 170 policemen were killed and 232 wounded, while in the same period the military casualties totalled 51 killed and 104 wounded.<sup>3</sup> Towards the end of 1919 it became difficult to enroll fresh recruits in Ireland for the police, and it was then that the British Government adopted the plan of enlisting bands of irregulars for service in Ireland. N.C.O.'s, who had been discharged when the Great War ended, and who were wearying for some new employment, were invited to enlist, with the inducement of very high rates of pay. Dressed in khaki and wearing black caps, they were nicknamed by the Irish Black-

<sup>1</sup> *King George the Fifth*: Somervell.

<sup>2</sup> Collins was Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Republican Army.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 135, 5th Series, p. 1758.

and-Tans, a name also used to describe a special corps of ex-officers recruited (at a pound a day) to bear the brunt of the Republican attack.

These irregular troops knew what was expected of them; they had to wage the war with the same weapons as their adversaries. Reprisals became the order of the day, and the Black-and-Tans and the R.I.C. showed that they had nothing to learn from each other in the arts of terrorizing the populace and devising atrocities. Sometimes the British troops disguised themselves as Sinn Feiners when they attacked some civilian supporters of the Republic, in order to throw the odium of the crime on the I.R.A. (Irish Republican Army). They were seldom successful. It was men dressed as Sinn Feiners who broke into the house of Thomas McCurtain, Republican Lord Mayor of Cork, and killed him before his wife's eyes. But a jury at the inquest on the dead man returned a verdict of wilful murder against David Lloyd George, Lord French (Lord Lieutenant of Ireland), and their agents.<sup>1</sup> The Sinn Feiners, on the other hand, seldom wished to conceal the acts of vengeance which they perpetrated. It was their policy to spread fear among the civilian population, in order that those of the Irish who were still weak supporters of the Republic might realize in time the error and danger of their vacillation.

The extent of the material damage for which the I.R.A. bore responsibility was considerable; by July, 1920, Sinn Feiners had destroyed property to the value of £2,000,000.<sup>2</sup> Between January and October, 1920, 667 attacks on police barracks were made, these involving in most cases the complete destruction of the buildings.<sup>3</sup> Private property did not escape, for there was a keen "competition in house-burning in which the rebels burned mansions when the soldiers burned cottages."<sup>4</sup> So in this respect reprisals did not pay.

A martyr to the cause of Irish freedom was Terence McSwiney, who succeeded McCurtain as Lord Mayor of Cork. Sentenced to two years' imprisonment by a court-martial for carrying out his duties in the name of the Irish Republic, he was lodged in Brixton Prison, and immediately started a hunger strike. In October, 1920, after an extraordinary fast of 74 days, the Alderman died.

<sup>1</sup> *Just the Other Day*: Collier and Lang.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 132, 5th Series, p. 608.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 133, 5th Series, p. 768.

<sup>4</sup> *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth*: Spender.

On 9th November, 1920, Lloyd George was optimistic enough to declare that they had "murder by the throat".<sup>1</sup> Twelve days later came "Bloody Sunday", when fourteen officers were murdered in hotels and houses in Dublin by bands of the I.R.A. On the same afternoon the Black-and-Tans took their revenge. They opened fire on some thousands of people who were watching a hurley match in a Dublin park, killing fourteen and wounding over sixty.<sup>2</sup> By a pleasing irony a new Government of Ireland Bill became law three days later, drafted "for the better government of Ireland". This Act, which superseded that of 1914, conceded independent Parliaments to Southern Ireland and to Ulster, both subordinate to that at Westminster. The Irish Republicans were contemptuous of this measure of freedom. Again the British Government's policy lagged behind that of the Irish. Had this Bill been offered some years before, it might have been welcomed—now the Nationalists were willing to accept only a republic in some form or other.

By 1921 it was obvious to Lloyd George and his colleagues in the Cabinet that they must make some vital concessions to the republican spirit in Ireland or undertake a war of suppression on a large scale. The Premier felt that the people of Britain would scarcely support him in a new conquest of Ireland carried out with the thoroughness of Cromwell or William III. There remained only negotiation, a task that seemed at first impossible. In May, 1921, Sir James Craig, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, was in touch with de Valera, but received no encouragement from the Republican leader to set on foot negotiations for peace. George V himself expressed his deep anxiety in the course of the speech he delivered at the opening of the Northern Parliament in Belfast on 22nd June. "I appeal," said the king, "to all Irishmen to pause, to stretch out the hand of forbearance and conciliation, to forgive and to forget, and to join in making for the land which they love a new era of peace, contentment, and goodwill." The appeal was not without effect. On 9th July a truce was negotiated between General Macready and two commandants (Barton and Duggan) of the I.R.A.

This was but a beginning. A delegation representing Southern Ireland, sent by de Valera, who wisely refused to take part in the discussions himself, crossed to London to start what proved difficult negotiations with the British Government. Michael Collins and

<sup>1</sup> On 19th October, 1920, an official spokesman declared in the Commons: "The Forces of the Crown are now effectively grappling with the organized, paid and brutal campaign of murder in Ireland." (*Hansard*, Vol. 133, 5th Series, p. 769.)

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 135, 5th Series, p. 454.

Arthur Griffith were both members of the delegation. The Republicans were hard and exacting bargainers. It was only after a threat from Lloyd George to renew the war if they did not finally accept a draft treaty that the Irish gave in. By this treaty, signed on 6th December, 1921, the twenty-six counties which the Republicans represented were formed into the Irish Free State, with the privileges of a self-governing Dominion under the British Crown. Ulster was excluded from the provisions of the treaty. This was the most that the British Government would concede, and Collins and Griffith, convinced that Ireland needed a breathing-space to recover from the ravages of the war, accepted the settlement. In the Dáil the treaty was approved by 64 to 57 votes. By the treaty the Irish pledged themselves to take an oath of allegiance to the king, to accept a Governor-General appointed by the Crown, and to hand over to the British Exchequer five million pounds yearly, the equivalent of the land annuities which Irish farmers had contracted to pay for loans advanced to them to buy their holdings.

De Valera denounced the treaty, and he and other of the extreme Republicans cut themselves off from their old friends, and prepared to continue the struggle. The plea of Michael Collins, who became head of a Provisional Government that was formed, that the treaty was merely a stepping-stone to the bank of complete independence, did not satisfy the Republicans. Ireland was now racked by a civil war between the pro-treaty supporters and their opponents. During the struggle, which was fought with as much bitterness as that between English and Irish troops, Arthur Griffith died in Dublin "with suspicious suddenness",<sup>1</sup> and ten days later Michael Collins was shot in County Cork from an ambush. The fighting did not end until May, 1923, when de Valera, realizing that for the time being resistance to the treaty was futile, called off hostilities. The Republicans were elected to the Dáil in 1925 to the number of 44, as against 63 deputies who accepted the treaty, but they refused to take their seats.

In December, 1922, William Cosgrave was appointed head of the Irish Free State (his official title was President of the Executive Council), and remained in power for nearly ten years. During that time the relations of the Irish Free State with the British Government were on the whole friendly. A border dispute with Ulster was settled after much recrimination in 1925. Southern Ireland enjoyed comparative peace, but the Republicans were merely quiescent,

<sup>1</sup> *Modern England (1885-1932)*: Marriott.

while working hard to increase their following in the country. The partition of Ireland was a matter which de Valera refused to accept as settled, but Sir James Craig (Lord Craigavon), Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, insisted that Ulster was satisfied with the status she enjoyed under the Act of 1920, and would oppose incorporation in the Irish Free State.<sup>1</sup>

In 1927 de Valera changed his tactics; he recognized the Irish Free State and allowed his supporters to take their seats in the Dáil. In the elections of that year the Republicans gained 57 seats while Cosgrave's party had 61. In the Dáil de Valera cultivated good relations with a small Labour Party. He won this party to his side, and after a general election in the spring of 1932 he had with Labour support a majority in the Dáil. He now proceeded to whittle down the authority of the British Parliament and the Crown in the affairs of the Irish Free State. He stripped the Governor-General of the greater part of his power, and abolished both the oath of allegiance to the king, which Dáil members had been required to take, and the Royal Veto on Bills. He deprived nationals of the Free State of "British" citizenship. Finally, he repudiated the payment to Britain of the land annuities which had been agreed to in the Irish Treaty of 1921. The money was still collected from the Irish farmers, but de Valera claimed that it belonged to the Free State Treasury.

De Valera's refusal to surrender the land annuities led to a trade war between Britain and the Irish Free State. The British Parliament imposed duties, which began at 20 per cent and were later raised to 40 per cent, on all Irish Free State imports into Britain. De Valera retaliated by imposing duties on British goods entering the Free State, and by giving bounties to Irish exporters to lessen the hardship of the British tariff measures. The trade war did considerable damage to the economy of both countries.

De Valera aimed at giving his country a fair degree of self-sufficiency, and encouraged the cultivation of pasture lands, the growing of sugar-beet, the setting up of factories of various kinds, &c. In the cultural sphere he strove to make the people conscious of the wealth of their inheritance. He promoted the growth of national feeling by insisting on the teaching of the Irish language in schools, by stimulating native crafts, and by fostering an interest in Irish Literature and History.

<sup>1</sup> Northern Ireland, although she has a Parliament of her own, is also represented in that at Westminster.

## CHAPTER XII

### NATIONALISM: INDIA

THE foundation in 1885 of an Indian National Congress marked the beginning of a nationalist movement in India, which increased in strength in the early twentieth century. During the Great War India showed herself on the whole a loyal supporter of the Empire. Indian troops shared in the fighting, and Indian princes contributed lavishly to the expenses of the war. In 1914 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (born 1869), a Hindu who was to be the outstanding figure in Indian history after the war, returned to his country from South Africa, where he had spent many years in a struggle for the rights of the Indian population. He admired the principles for which Britain stood in the war, and advised his countrymen "to fight unconditionally unto death with Britain for victory". He became a prominent and active member of the National Congress, with an extraordinary influence over the masses of India. Half saint and half astute politician, Gandhi was a perpetual source of trouble to the British Government after the Great War, while at the same time his chameleon-like changes of character and policy bewildered both his followers and his opponents. At one moment he was well in the front of political agitation, at the next he had retired into seclusion, seeking to find salvation for India in fasting or in spinning. It was in Africa that Gandhi first developed the policy, which he adopted against the Indian Government, of Civil Disobedience, i.e. non-violent non-co-operation with the law. "His technique of conquering material violence by *Satyagraha* or soul force," wrote Wingfield-Stratford, "which impressed the Western consciousness as a unique discovery, or monomania . . . was merely the doctrine that had been taught in every Christian Church for centuries as that of Christ on the Mount."<sup>1</sup>

The value of India's contribution during the war did not go unacknowledged by British statesmen, who resolved to satisfy the nationalist feeling in the country by the declaration of a liberal

<sup>1</sup> *The Harvest of Victory.*

policy in Indian government. This was made in 1917 by Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, who announced that the aim of His Majesty's Government was "the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". There were two "blessed" words in the vocabulary of the Nationalists in India; these were "self-determination" and "Dominion status". It seemed to them that Britain, with unwonted generosity, intended that their ideal of a free India would soon be realized. They paid little attention to some further words of the Secretary of State, who warned them that the British Government "must be judges of the time and measure of each advance: they must be guided by the co-operation received from those upon whom the new opportunities of service will thus be conferred".

But it was admitted also that "substantial steps should be taken as soon as possible", and Montagu proceeded to draw up, in collaboration with Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, a report on the reforms which might justly be put into operation without delay. This was published in July, 1918, a month which saw also the publication of a report of a very different kind: one drawn up by a committee under the direction of Mr. Justice Rowlatt, to which had been entrusted the task of deciding what measures ought to be taken to crush the disorder that periodically broke out among the wilder sections of the Indian Nationalists. This was necessary, for the special powers to deal with disturbances, which the Government had assumed during the war years, were now due to lapse. The recommendations of the committee were embodied in two Rowlatt Acts, passed into law in March, 1919, which gave the Indian Government wide discretionary powers to deal with disorder in the country, and provided for the institution, if necessary, of special tribunals for the trial of offenders, and for the imprisonment of suspects without trial.

These repressive measures provoked an outburst of anger in India. They offended Gandhi, by this time leader of the Nationalist movement, and he inaugurated a Civil Disobedience Campaign, part of which was the proclamation of a hartal (i.e. the complete stoppage of business) in Delhi for a day. Anti-British feeling grew strong and was fanned by the "Caliphate agitation". The breaking-up of the Turkish Empire after the Great War, and the control which the Allies exercised over the Sultan-Caliph in Constantinople,

caused uneasiness among the Moslem population of the East, who feared that the Western Powers (in particular Britain) were making a conscious attack on their religion. For a time Gandhi was actually successful in combining Hindu and Mohammedan against this Western threat to the East, but the Moslem agitation completely lost its force when Mustapha Kemal abolished the Caliphate.<sup>1</sup> It was the leader of a new Turkey and not Britain who dealt this vital blow to the followers of Islam. Even before this happened the unnatural alliance between Hindu and Moslem proved to have no strength. A rising in 1921 of the savage Moplahs, a Moslem people in the south of India, against their Hindu neighbours, showed how unstable it was. For the next few years communal riots were of frequent occurrence all over India.

Gandhi's policy of passive resistance was interpreted by his followers in a very different way from what it was by the leader. Riots and disorder of all kinds spread over the country,<sup>2</sup> and after the Mahatma's proclamation of the hartal in March, 1919, many acts of violence were committed, particularly in the Punjab. Called on by the civil authorities to restore order, General Dyer, in command of the British troops there, took immediate and vigorous action. At Amritsar on the 13th April he ordered his men to fire upon an unlawful assembly of unarmed Indians who had gathered in an enclosed garden. The only exit from this garden was that held by the British troops. For ten minutes firing went on continuously, with the result that 379 Indians were killed and 1200 wounded.

Dyer's "frightfulness" divided British opinion into two opposite camps. Officially he was condemned for his action and relieved of further command in India. The House of Commons endorsed a condemnation of Dyer,<sup>3</sup> but the Lords rejected it. This divergence of opinion was reflected throughout the country. While the mass of the people found little to excuse the atrocity, a minority claimed that Dyer's promptitude had saved India from the horrors of a Second Mutiny. A national newspaper raised a large sum of money for him from those of its readers who approved of what he had done.

The Amritsar Massacre gave the Indian Nationalists material for propaganda such as had never fallen into their hands before. What angered the Nationalists almost as much as the shooting of

<sup>1</sup> See p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> On 30th March, for example, 6 natives were killed and 16 wounded during a riot that broke out in Delhi as a protest against the Rowlatt Acts. (*Hansard*, Vol. 114, 5th Series, pp. 1863-4.)

<sup>3</sup> See *Hansard*, Vol. 131, 5th Series, pp. 1705-1814.



their countrymen was an order issued by Dyer compelling all natives to crawl past a spot where a particularly brutal attack had been made by some roughs on a British missionary. The atmosphere was hardly propitious for the institution, under Britain's guidance, of a new and liberal form of government for India, but the time for this was drawing near. The recommendations of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, which had been issued in July, 1918, were incorporated into a new Government of India Bill that became law in December, 1919.

By this Act Britain still retained her hold on the Central Government of India,<sup>1</sup> but in the Provincial Assemblies radical changes were made, and there the Indian demand for self-government received a large measure of satisfaction. A system of dyarchy was instituted. While certain subjects (control of police, administration of justice, taxation, &c.) were "reserved" for the British Governor and his officials, others (including education and public health) were transferred to Indian ministers, responsible to their Representative Assemblies. These changes took effect only in British India; the native states, which formed a third of the country, continued to be governed as before by the ruling Princes.

The extreme Nationalists were dissatisfied with this new Government of India Act, arguing that it failed to give them the independence they demanded, and Congress, influenced by Gandhi, boycotted the elections held in 1920. Indians of comparatively moderate opinion were, therefore, appointed to the Provincial Assemblies and to the Central Legislature. In January, 1921, government under the new constitution began. In the same year Lord Reading became Viceroy in succession to Chelmsford, and the Rowlatt Acts were repealed.

Dyarchy was obviously a difficult form of government to work. In certain provinces the Governor abolished to a great extent in practice the distinction between reserved and transferred subjects, and placed the Indian ministers on a footing with their British colleagues, consulting both in matters which arose. In these circumstances the government of the province was carried on without trouble. "The success achieved in avoiding conflict within the Government itself was attained by encouraging its operation as a single whole rather than by keeping separate the two component

<sup>1</sup> The Central Legislature, consisting of an Upper and a Lower House, in both of which the elected members were in a majority, could influence the Viceroy and his Council. In the Provincial Assemblies, also, the majority of the members were elected, the rest were nominated.

parts.”<sup>1</sup> In other provinces, where the two types of subjects were kept strictly separate, disputes soon developed between the Indian ministers and the British officials. It was the knowledge of incessant conflicts of this kind that later provoked the reproach of the Simon Commission against dyarchy that “it was educating India in irresponsibility”.

A body of the Nationalists under Motilal Nehru took part in the elections held in 1923, and gained many seats both in the Provincial Councils and in the Central Assembly. The avowed purpose of this Swaraj (i.e. Home Rule) party was to wreck the constitution from within—to use what obstructive means were at hand to discredit dyarchy and to prevent its working. It was scarcely a matter of wonder that the new system of government in India did not prove a success. In 1926, when Lord Irwin succeeded Reading as Viceroy, the political state of the country was very unsatisfactory. The frequency of communal riots was an urgent problem which, among others, the new Viceroy had to face. He was freed for a time from the embarrassing activity of Gandhi, who, after being in prison in 1922–24, had retired into seclusion, except that he made occasional abrupt and unexpected incursions into the troubled fields of political conflict. The Mahatma declared himself wholly devoted to freeing India from the bondage of the West, this to be done, however, not by active opposition to British rule, but by the revival of traditional Indian crafts, as, for example, hand-spinning. The spinning-wheel which Gandhi carried about with him wherever he went (his followers imitated the practice of their leader) became a symbol of the hope of India’s regeneration.

By the middle of the ’twenties it was recognized that some change was necessary in the government of India. In 1927 a Statutory Commission, of which Sir John Simon was the chairman, was appointed to visit India and report on the situation. No Indians were invited to become members of the Commission, and this gave offence to the Nationalists, who decided to boycott it when it arrived in India. This they did, and it was only from a group of moderate Indians, under Sir Sankaran Nair, that the Commission got any information about Indian opinion. The first visit of the Simon Commission to India was in 1928. In that year Congress, which repudiated Sir Sankaran Nair’s committee, issued its demands, namely, immediate Dominion status and the abolition of the India Office. The Simon Commission found it necessary to pay a second

<sup>1</sup> Simon Report, Cmd. 3568, 1930, Vol. I., p. 213.

visit to India in 1929. Terrorism had again reared its ugly head in the country, particularly in Bengal, and the customary communal disturbances were more frequent than ever. In August, 1929, Lord Irwin stated that during the previous eighteen months the casualties arising from communal riots had been between 250 and 300 killed and about ten times as many wounded. Meantime the Simon Commission continued its investigations. A declaration which the Viceroy uttered in October, that "the natural issue of India's constitutional progress was the attainment of Dominion status", gratified a large body of Indians. Congress, however, was no longer satisfied with Dominion status. There is a French adage that in every revolutionary movement "a left of the left" appears, and that concession merely provokes some further demand. So it was with Congress. At the end of 1929 their demand was for complete independence. They refused to take part in any conference for the discussion of India's government, and announced that a new Civil Disobedience Campaign would be started.

In June, 1930, the Simon Report was published, generally acknowledged to be one of the most important state papers of these times. It recommended the abolition of dyarchy and the immediate institution of complete responsible government in the Provinces, with the proviso that, in an emergency, the Governor of a Province could intervene and override his ministers. The Central Legislature was to remain untouched for the time being, but the Report envisaged an India on a federal basis, with each self-governing Province, as well as each of the Indian states, represented in a Central Assembly. It was emphasized that the new constitution should be elastic, to permit of necessary development without further commissions and reports and radical changes.

How to fit the Indian Princes into a new Indian constitution was a problem that forced itself on the Simon Commission, as also on a committee under Sir Harcourt Butler, which had been set up to examine the position of the native states. Obviously the Princes would sit in an Assembly only if responsibility for government was granted to them; they would refuse to act merely in an advisory capacity without control over legislation. This was the standpoint also of the Indian Nationalists, who insisted that the Central Legislature must be freed absolutely from Britain's control, and become a responsible body.

With the Simon Report as a basis for discussion, a Round Table Conference was convened in London in 1930. It represented all

shades of Indian opinion except that of Congress, which boycotted it. The first session of the Conference (November, 1930–January, 1931) was the most important, for it was then that the proposal to draw up a federal constitution for India was agreed to. The Indian Princes were willing to accept federation provided that there was responsible government in the Central Council.

In the meantime the Nationalist leaders were making matters as uncomfortable as they could for Britain's rulers in India. Gandhi returned to political life, and in April, 1930, solemnly inaugurated the threatened Civil Disobedience Campaign by making salt—an illegal act, since the manufacture of salt was a Government monopoly, reserved for revenue purposes. The campaign ranged from a refusal to pay taxes to bomb-throwing, and the Government in India was forced to pass emergency ordinances to give it additional powers against the law-breakers. Gandhi and other of the leaders were imprisoned.<sup>1</sup>

The year 1931 was quieter. When the Indian representatives at the London Conference returned to their own country they managed to make peace between Gandhi and the Viceroy. The Civil Disobedience Campaign was called off, and the Mahatma, released from prison, agreed to attend the second session of the Round Table Conference as the mouthpiece of Congress. This session took place in September–December, 1931. Its main result was to make clear to those taking part the difficulties of their task. The Conference broke down on the question of communal representation; it was found impossible to come to any agreement about the representation of Hindus and Mohammedans under the new constitution, or indeed to find any basis for agreement among the rival communities generally. The task of solving this problem was left in Britain's hands. The India Office eventually produced a scheme, "which perhaps proved its fairness by giving equal offence to all sections of Indian opinion".<sup>2</sup>

Gandhi was in bad humour when he returned to India in 1932, and immediately picked a quarrel with Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy who had taken Irwin's place in 1931. He demanded the repeal of the emergency ordinances which the Government had passed. This the Viceroy refused. A new Civil Disobedience Campaign was then started, with its usual accompaniments of violence and disorder.

<sup>1</sup> Casualties due to disturbances for the month of April, 1930, totalled 43 killed and some 370 wounded. (*Hansard*, Vol. 239, 5th Series, p. 1746.)

<sup>2</sup> *King George the Fifth*: Somervell.

Willington was not faint-hearted. He met the challenge of Congress very firmly, arresting first of all Gandhi and his chief associates. The Viceroy's policy bore fruit, for Civil Disobedience gradually waned, and in 1933 the situation had so improved that the Government released more than two thirds of the agitators who had been imprisoned in the spring of 1932.<sup>1</sup>

When the British Government's scheme of representation under the new constitution was announced, Gandhi declared that it was unjust to the "untouchables" (the fifty million low-caste Hindus), and announced a "fast unto death" unless some change was made. This was done in time to save the Mahatma's life, the caste Hindus agreeing to a modification of the original proposals in order to give greater representation to the "untouchables". Gandhi was satisfied on this point, but, obsessed with the sin and shame of "untouchability", he felt that it was now his task to force this on the consciousness of his countrymen.

Towards the end of 1932 a third session of the Round Table Conference met, and in March, 1933, the British Government issued a White Paper with its proposals for a new constitution for India.

<sup>1</sup> At the end of December, 1932, 14,815 convicted persons were undergoing imprisonment in connection with the Civil Disobedience Campaign. (*Hansard*, Vol. 274, 5th Series, p. 22.)

## CHAPTER XIII

### MOSLEM WORLD

ON 11th October, 1922, an armistice was concluded at Mudania between the British troops stationed at Chanak and the Nationalist Turkish force which had chased the Greeks out of Smyrna, and was eager, had not the British stood in its path, to continue the pursuit into and through Thrace. The subservience which the Sultan, Mehmed VI, had shown (under compulsion) to the Allies made his position untenable in the eyes of the Nationalists, and on 1st November, 1922, the abolition of the Sultanate was proclaimed. The Sultan-Caliph fled from Constantinople, the British providing a warship to take him to safety. The Turkish National Assembly elected a cousin of the deposed Sultan to be Caliph, with purely spiritual and no temporal power over the faithful.

After somewhat difficult negotiations between the Allies and the Nationalists, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923, and Mustafa Kemal, the saviour of Turkey's independence, now turned to the task of consolidating the purely national Turkish state of Anatolia. He was reconciled to the loss of the pre-war Ottoman Empire. Although Turkey still held a firm grasp of her European territory of East Thrace, Kemal emphasized his country's Asiatic outlook and her desire to build a national life in Anatolia by changing the capital from Constantinople (renamed Istanbul) to Ankara (formerly Angora) on 13th October, 1923.

On 29th October, 1923, a republic was proclaimed in Turkey and Kemal, the Ghazi (Conqueror of Infidels), became the first President. Turkey was virtually ruled by an oligarchy with Kemal himself at its head. The usual feature of a dictatorship, the censorship of hostile criticism, particularly in the Press, was generally in evidence in the new Turkey. Actually at times a fairly effective opposition developed in Parliament, but Kemal's position was never seriously challenged. In March, 1927, and again in 1931, he was re-elected President of the Republic.

There was no indecision in Kemal's character; he knew in peace,

just as in war, exactly what he wanted. His aim, first of all, was to free Turkey from foreign influence, and by the Treaty of Lausanne, capitulations—the extra-territorial rights which foreigners had hitherto enjoyed in Turkey—came to an end. In the second place, he was determined that there should be but one supreme ruling power in national Turkey, without a rival claiming authority over and obedience from the people. Accordingly the dictator turned to the task of destroying the secular power of the Moslem religion in the state and the influence it wielded in education, justice, and indeed in the whole life generally of the people. On 3rd March, 1924, the Caliphate was abolished. Despite the fact that the Caliph who had been appointed in November, 1922, exercised only spiritual authority over the followers of Islam, Kemal felt that, as long as the office remained, his own supreme position would be weakened. The Caliph, therefore, had to go.<sup>1</sup>

The abolition of the Caliphate was the first step to the secularization of the state, a process which was concurrent with the modelling of the Turkish Republic on Western European lines. Religious schools were replaced by State schools, religious courts were abolished, and new Civil and Penal Codes, based on Western models, were introduced. One anti-religious measure (passed on 25th November, 1925) that met with considerable opposition was the abolition of the fez in favour of Western headgear. Its significance lay in this, that, in accordance with Moslem law, prayer is said by a believer only when his head is covered, and it is necessary for him, moreover, to touch the ground with his forehead while he utters his petitions. These conditions were satisfied by the fez, but not by a European hat. The opposition which this measure aroused was crushed ruthlessly by the dictator. Before this he had crushed equally effectively (it took only three months) a revolt of the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia which broke out in February, 1925. The revolt was provoked partly by the anti-religious legislation of Kemal, and partly by the economic distress which Turkey, like other states in the world, suffered in the years after the Great War.

F. Yeats-Brown wrote in 1939:

“To-day, in new Ankara, there is not a church or mosque. When the French wanted to build a private chapel by their Embassy they were asked not to make it too conspicuous, as it would spoil the aspect of the ‘laicized city’. Mullahs going to call the Faithful to prayer may not do so in their robes and turban: they must wear an overcoat and a slouch

<sup>1</sup> See *Grey Wolf*: H. C. Armstrong. This is an able biography of Kemal.

hat until safely within the precincts of the mosque. Even visiting Christian clergymen must turn their collars round, disguising themselves as civilians. . . . Yet religion is not persecuted, though its priests may not wear the uniform of their calling."<sup>1</sup>

Kemal altered entirely the position of women in Turkey by abolishing the Moslem prohibitions which had been observed for centuries. Women were encouraged to take a share in the normal life of the state on the same footing as men. They no longer wore the veil in public, they dressed in European clothes, and they danced with the abandon that delighted European youth in the 'twenties—this an amusement particularly wicked in the eyes of orthodox Moslems. Girls' schools were established, and the professions thrown open to women. In February, 1931, Kemal spoke of the equal status which all the citizens of the Republic enjoyed, and suggested that in the future even military service might be demanded from women.

The whole system of Turkish education was overhauled under Kemal's rule. A census in 1927 showed that 92 per cent of the population were illiterate. In March, 1931, elementary education was made compulsory. To simplify both education and also the economic life of the people radical changes were made: Latin script replaced the old Arabic; the Gregorian Calendar was introduced; and European numerals and the metric system were adopted.

Kemal planned in a comprehensive way the development of both agriculture and industry in the new Turkey. Large schemes of railway and road construction were carried out. Tobacco and carpet factories, sugar refineries, and silk and other textile mills were built. When Kemal came into power there were but 150 factories in Turkey; in 1933 the number was 2000.<sup>2</sup> Both internal and foreign trade were developed. The dictator concluded commercial agreements with other powers—with Russia, for example, in 1927, and with Britain in 1929. Up to 1926 Turkey looked to Russia as her main friend, but in the following years her political horizon widened, and she cultivated friendly relations with all her neighbours and the Western European states. On 18th July, 1932, she became a member of the League of Nations.

Writing towards the end of the 'thirties Gunther summarized in a paragraph the achievements of Kemal Atatürk.<sup>3</sup> (In 1934 the

<sup>1</sup> *European Jungle*.    <sup>2</sup> *Our Own Times*: King-Hall.

<sup>3</sup> Kemal died in November, 1938, and General Ismet İnönü, who was appointed President, ruled Turkey in the same spirit as his predecessor.



dictator ordered his subjects to follow Western European practice by adopting each a family name. He himself chose Ataturk, meaning Father of Turks.) Gunther wrote:

“ His reforms have been so drastic and comprehensive that in cultural and social fields at least there is very little left to do. . . . He has ended polygamy, installed new legal codes, and experimented with a (paying) casino in the Sultan's palace. He compulsorily disinfected all the buildings in Istanbul . . . and took the first census in Turkish history. He cut political holidays down to three, demanded physical examination of those about to marry, and built a new capital, Ankara, in the Anatolian highlands, replacing proud Constantinople. He limited most business activity to Turkish nationals and Turkish firms, abolished books of magic, and gave every Turk a new name. He emancipated the women (more or less), tossed the priests into discard, and superintended the writing of a new history of the world proving that Turkey is the source of all civilization.”<sup>1</sup>

The Arab territories over which the Sultan had for centuries ruled were freed from Turkish control during or immediately after the Great War. In 1914 the suzerainty of the Sultan over Egypt was declared at an end. Arabia became independent of Turkey, and was left to decide its own destiny in the rivalry of Emir Husein, King of the Hedjaz, and Ibn Saud, Chief of the Wahhabis, with less powerful antagonists anxious to weaken the authority of these greater chieftains. By 1926 Ibn Saud had made himself virtually supreme in Arabia, although rebellious chiefs in the country were ready, if an opportunity came, to throw off their allegiance to him. 'Iraq (Mesopotamia), Palestine, and Transjordanian were handed over under mandate to Britain, and France obtained a mandate over Syria. This disposition of the pre-war Turkish territories was not one that was accepted willingly by the inhabitants, who, having rid themselves of Turkish rule, had hoped for greater independence than the Allies seemed prepared to grant. The spirit of nationalism and the plea of self-determination had as violent repercussions in the Moslem World as among the peoples in the east of Europe. Neither Britain nor France found that the nations whom they proposed to rule were willing to submit without a struggle.

Britain's troubles in Egypt started immediately after the Great War. In effect, Britain had exercised since 1882 a protectorate of a “ veiled ” kind over Egypt. In 1914 the protectorate was unequivocally proclaimed, and a High Commissioner (Sir F. Reginald Wingate was appointed in 1916) took the place of the “ Agent and

<sup>1</sup> *Inside Europe.*

Consul-General", who until then had looked after Britain's interests. Britain's rule was thoroughly unpopular among the Egyptians, and early in 1919 a nationalist movement became clamorous. Zaghlul, the leader of the Nationalists, demanded complete independence for Egypt, but this the British Government refused even to discuss. In the first half of 1919 British statesmen were too engrossed in what was to them the more important task of concluding a European peace settlement to pay much attention to the agitation going on in Egypt. The Egyptians were in a hurry, however, and, when a proposal which they made for an immediate conference in London was turned down, the British Government suggesting that it should be deferred to a "more convenient time", the Nationalists became more active than ever. The British Cabinet recalled Wingate, and took strong action in Egypt by deporting Zaghlul and three other important leaders to Malta. This, instead of easing matters, precipitated outbursts of rebellion all over the country. There were strikes and riots, including an attack upon a train at Dairut with the death of seven British soldiers and an official.

Lord Allenby, Commander-in-Chief of the forces which had completely defeated the Turkish army in 1918, was appointed Acting High Commissioner for Egypt, his first task being to restore order. This he was able to do, showing, moreover, moderation in his treatment of the rebellious Nationalists. He recognized the need for conciliation, and pointed this out to the Government at home. A Commission, under Lord Milner, the Colonial Secretary, arrived in Egypt in November, 1919, to investigate. It suffered the same fate as the Simon Commission in India; the Nationalists at first would have nothing to do with it. After four months' work it returned to England. Zaghlul, in Egypt again after a brief period of exile, now expressed his willingness to bring a Nationalist delegation to London to discuss Egyptian affairs with the Commission. This meeting was arranged, and at the end of 1920 the two parties had reached agreement. The Milner Commission was prepared to concede independence to Egypt with certain reservations, but the negotiations proved abortive, for the British Cabinet refused to accept Milner's proposals.

The year 1921 was passed in fruitless discussions, despite Allenby's warning that if the protectorate was continued there was grave danger of a serious revolution in Egypt. The Cabinet still remained obdurate, and it was not until Allenby resigned and appeared in London that the British Government yielded. On

28th February, 1922, the protectorate was formally abolished, and Britain admitted the independent sovereignty of Egypt. But this declaration was accompanied by reservations concerning the security of Britain's communications with the East, the defence of Egypt against foreign attack, the protection of foreign and minority interests, and the status of the Sudan. Britain claimed the right to retain armed forces in Egypt, to guard, in particular, the Suez Canal. Moreover, since Britain had conquered the Sudan, the Nationalist claim that this territory was part of Egypt was held to be untenable. The Nationalist point of view was that the Sudan was vital to Egypt, since those who ruled in the Sudan controlled the Nile, Egypt's lifeline.

So the treaty of 1922 did not free Egypt entirely from British control, although it gave the country nominal independence. The first king of Egypt was Fuad, who had been Sultan of the country since 1917. He was proclaimed king in March, 1922. In 1923 a democratic constitution was adopted. The Wafd (Nationalist) party, with Zaghlul as its leader, was supreme in the Assembly which was convened. But Egypt was not yet at peace, for Nationalist agitation against Britain continued. Acts of violence were committed, culminating in the assassination in Cairo of Sir Lee Stack, Governor-General of the Sudan, in November, 1924. Britain exacted a fine of half a million pounds from the Egyptian Government for this crime, and insisted on the withdrawal of Egyptian detachments from the Sudan. Unsuccessful attempts were made in 1927-28 and 1929-30 to settle the disputed points in Anglo-Egyptian relations.

The persistent Nationalist agitation and violence were disastrous to good government in Egypt. In 1928 Fuad dismissed a discredited Nationalist ministry, whose leader was Nahas Pasha, and replaced it by one of a more liberal mind. But the Wafd Party proved continuously troublesome, and in 1930 the king, suspending the 1923 Constitution, promulgated one of his own which gave him almost unlimited powers. With his favourite, Sidky Pasha, as Prime Minister, he reverted to a system of Palace Government. In elections held in 1931, in which the Wafd and other democratic parties refused to take part, Sidky Pasha gained a large majority.

As in Egypt, Britain's difficulties in Palestine after the Great War were caused by an outburst of national feeling among the Arabs who lived in the country. Britain's position as a mandatory power in Palestine was complicated by the famous Balfour declaration

made in the House of Commons on 2nd November, 1917. This is what Balfour said:

"His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

The main purpose of the Balfour declaration was to enlist the support of Jews all over the world on the side of the allies.<sup>1</sup> Subsidiary to this, but having influence no doubt with British statesmen, was the conviction that a country so strategically situated in relation to the Suez Canal as Palestine might well be in hands favourable to British interests. Naturally the Zionists among the Jews saw in the Balfour promise the hope of realizing the century-old Jewish longing to rebuild a homeland in the country of their fathers. The Arabs of Palestine, on the other hand, viewed with suspicion a promise, qualified as it was, which seemed to threaten their national life, and to give Jewish immigrants a privileged position that might ultimately destroy the sovereignty of the Arab race in this region. Balfour's declaration was not in harmony with the principle of self-determination, so often quoted by official Allied spokesmen, for in 1917 the majority of the inhabitants of Palestine were of non-Jewish origin.<sup>2</sup>

With the help of the rebellious Arab subjects of the Turkish Empire the war in the East was won, and the time came for Britain to fulfil her pledges. In April, 1920, she received a mandate to rule Palestine, undertaking thereby to pave the way for the ultimate institution of self-government in the country. The task of a mandatory power was difficult enough in such places as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, where there was in each a more or less homo-

<sup>1</sup> "It was important for us to seek every legitimate help we could get. We came to the conclusion, from information we received from every part of the world, that it was vital we should have the sympathies of the Jewish community." (Lloyd George in House of Commons, 19th June, 1936.)

<sup>2</sup> According to the census of 1922 the population of Palestine was:

Moslems	..	..	590,890
Jews	..	..	83,794
Christians	..	..	73,024
Others	..	..	9,474
Total	..	..	757,182

(*The Statesman's Year-Book*, 1924)

geneous population, with not one large section opposed bitterly racially or by religion to another. But in Palestine Britain undertook fairly light-heartedly a *tour de force*—the union in a self-governing community of two such discordant elements as the Jews and the Arabs—which Professor Toynbee compared “to the action of a small boy who has witnessed an accidental explosion of gunpowder in a neighbour’s garden, and, finding only one of the necessary ingredients in his own, has bought a sackful of the necessary saltpetre and having mixed it well in is waiting for the wind to blow a spark that way.”<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after the acceptance by Britain of the mandate for Palestine there were anti-Jewish riots in the country. Sir Herbert Samuel was appointed the first High Commissioner—a wise choice, for he conducted the administration with rare impartiality, and did not favour the Jews, who were of his own race.<sup>2</sup> Controlled by Britain, Jewish emigration to Palestine started, and between the years 1923 and 1933 the Jewish population increased from 85,000 to 230,000. The country benefited from the arrival and work of the Jews. Jewish capital flowed into Palestine (50 million pounds between 1920 and 1934), and Jewish brains and determination developed the apparently meagre resources of the land with a success that was astonishing. What had been desert was changed into orange and citron groves and vineyards. One of the Jews’ greatest achievements was the transforming of a tiny poverty-stricken suburb of Jaffa into a modern city of well-designed buildings and spacious thoroughfares, called Tel Aviv, which had in 1933 a population of 80,000. In the same year 133 new factories were built in Palestine, 65 of these in Tel Aviv.<sup>3</sup>

But with the growth of Jewish influence in Palestine the anxiety of the Arabs increased. Particularly serious in Arab eyes became the purchase of land by the Jews. The Arab proprietor was tempted to sell his land by the good price which the Jew offered. Soon he found his fortune gone—he had not the ability to invest his money profitably—and he forgot the profit he had received as he grumbled that the Jewish encroachment on Arab land would soon give him a predominant position in the state. Anti-Semitic feeling came to a head in August, 1929, when a dispute which started between Arabs and Jews in the neighbourhood of the “Wailing Wall” at

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920–1934* by Gathorne-Hardy.

<sup>2</sup> See *Orientations*: Sir Ronald Storrs.

<sup>3</sup> *Our Own Times*: King-Hall.

Jerusalem developed into a general riot. The "Wailing Wall" has deep religious significance for both Jew and Arab. To the Jews it marks the spot where once their Temple stood; to the Arabs it is part of a wall enclosing the holy ground from which their prophet was transported. Both Arab and Jew hold devotional services on the same date at this spot, the Jews in memory of the destruction of the Temple, the Arabs in celebration of the birthday of Mohammed. The conflict which occurred in 1929 led to the death of 140 Jews and 116 Arabs.

A Commission of Inquiry (the Shaw Commission) examined the Palestine problem, and in its report emphasized the fear which haunted the Arabs that in time, with the Jews in possession of their country, they would become, economically and politically, a subject people.<sup>1</sup> The Jewish virtue of perseverance—the virtue that builds on what seems uncongenial soil a prosperous and solidly founded economy—becomes soon in the eyes of a rival dangerous aggressiveness which threatens to crush the non-Jewish community. In 1930 the Permanent Mandates Commission at Geneva censured Britain's carrying out of her mandate for Palestine, condemning in particular her failure to bring about co-operation between Arab and Jew. The British Government could be accused with some justice of rather a vacillating policy. A White Paper<sup>2</sup> issued in 1930 was considered anti-Semitic in tone and substance, and provoked protests from Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the eminent Jewish leader, who was President of the World Jewish Organization, 1917–30, and other Zionists. Immediately Britain's policy underwent a change. Ramsay MacDonald attempted in a letter to Dr. Weizmann to explain away the Government's previous declaration, and was promptly reproached by the Arab leaders for being hostile to them. After the conflict in 1929 Britain continued her efforts to bring Jew and Arab together.

In Transjordan, lying east of Palestine, Britain's rule as a mandatory power did not meet with serious difficulties. In 1923 autonomy was granted to Transjordan, and Abdullah, a son of the Emir Husein of the Hedjaz, became king. The administration was in the hands of Arabs, with British advisers to guide them. The defence forces of the country were also under the command of British officers.

The mandate for 'Iraq, accepted by Britain in 1920, was not welcome to the 'Iraqis, who wished for complete independence, and revolts had to be suppressed. In 1921, Feisal, another son of

<sup>1</sup> Shaw Commission Report, Cmd. 3530, 1930.      <sup>2</sup> Cmd. 3692, 1930.

Husein, was elected ruler, an appointment which Britain procured as a conciliatory measure. But the task of the mandatory power was beset with obstacles, and to replace the mandate a treaty was concluded in 1922, Britain agreeing to secure the admission of 'Iraq to the League of Nations at a future date when the political development of the country justified the step. The 'Iraqis remained uneasy under Britain's tutelage until a definite promise was made that Britain would support 'Iraq's admission to the League in 1932. In anticipation of this step a Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Support was signed between Britain and 'Iraq in 1931, providing for the retention of British military forces in the country until 1937, and for the leasing of air-bases by Britain. The 'Iraqis still felt that they had not yet been granted the independence promised them. In 1932 'Iraq duly became a member of the League of Nations.

Britain's difficulties in 'Iraq, and even in Palestine up to 1930, were small in comparison with those encountered by the French in Syria. On 24th April, 1920, at the Conference of San Remo, where the Supreme Allied Council allocated the mandates for the Arab states, that for Syria was assigned to France. This was in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement of May, 1916, which had admitted France's predominant interests in Syria. The inhabitants of Syria did not welcome a mandate—they claimed their independence—but, if a mandatory power was to be forced upon them, the one they least wanted as a whole was France. Moreover, the Emir Feisal was in occupation of Damascus. On 3rd October, 1918, in the company of Colonel T. E. Lawrence, he had led a body of Arab cavalry into Damascus, and hoisted the Arab standard. Now he claimed to be the king of an independent Arab state, a region including the towns of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. So the French mandate was instituted with a display of force—the driving of Feisal out of the country in August, 1920—and had to be maintained by strong force.

The French gave offence to the Syrians by dividing the mandated territory into five states, "separated by the paraphernalia of different administrations, different Budgets, different flags, and united by doubtful bonds supplied by French officers and officials and by a common currency of depreciated French francs."<sup>1</sup> These states were: Lebanon, Latakia, Alexandretta, Jebel ed Druse, and the State of Syria, with its capital of Damascus. The favour, moreover, which the French accorded to the Lebanese Christians angered

<sup>1</sup> *The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.

the Moslem population. Sporadic rebellions broke out, culminating in 1925, shortly after the appointment of General Sarrail as High Commissioner, in a revolt of the Druses. This wild people, living amid the rugged mountains of the south, addressed legitimate complaints to the High Commissioner about the severe and unjust rule of the French Governor who administered their territory. General Sarrail rejected these complaints, and the French followed up this rejection by an act of treachery. Certain Druse chieftains were invited to Damascus for a conference to discuss their grievances, but immediately they arrived they were arrested.<sup>1</sup> It was then that the Druse revolt broke out, and rebellion spread to other parts of the country. There was fighting in Damascus, and the French bombarded this historic city, an action which roused indignation throughout the world. It was only after the French had largely increased their forces in Syria—employing, moreover, mercenaries and Senegalese troops—that their authority was restored.

General Sarrail was replaced immediately after the bombardment of Damascus by M. de Jouvenel, who in March, 1926, assured the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations that France's ultimate aim was to replace the mandate by a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with Syria. This declaration heartened the Syrians, but their hopes of its being quickly fulfilled were disappointed. Difficulties arose at every turn. A Constituent Assembly for the State of Syria was elected in 1928, and it produced a constitution which the French refused to accept. The Syrian Nationalists insisted that all the five provinces into which the French had divided the territory should be treated as a political whole. The French, on the other hand, produced five constitutions, one for each of the states. By 1933 the French had their Treaty of Friendship drafted, but its provisions were so far incompatible with Syrian independence that it was rejected by all Syrian parties. So an impasse was reached.

The post-war years made clear in these Arab states the difficulties that confronted the Western Powers in their attempt to force their rule upon unwilling peoples. Before 1914 there had not been the same difficulty. It was during and after the Great War that nationalism became a strong force in the East. In the early 'thirties the problem that faced Britain (in Egypt and Palestine) and France (in Syria) of how to reconcile this national spirit with the Imperial and other interests of the Western Powers was one that seemed difficult of solution.

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1925, pp. [244-245].



## CHAPTER XIV

### GREAT BRITAIN, 1919-24

THE Coalition Government which was elected in Britain in December, 1918, had the task not only of making peace with the enemy but also of restoring peace conditions at home—of getting rid as soon as possible of the confusion that followed the ending of hostilities. It was necessary to dismantle the enormous military machine that had been built in the years 1914-18, and to reorganize the industrial and economic life of the country on a peace-time footing. This meant an end to the war-time control of industry, and secondly, the demobilization of the armed forces. The latter task was carried out with remarkable smoothness. There were some grumblings among the ranks in the first month or two after the armistice, because the rate of demobilization seemed to the weary soldiers at home and abroad not nearly quick enough. By the middle of January, however, half a million men had returned to civilian life, and demobilization continued at the rate of 50,000 a day. Fears were expressed at home that the change from war to peace conditions would so slow down the industrial machine that a large number of the returned soldiers, and also the men and women discharged from munition factories, would perforce remain idle. The Government passed a measure entitling ex-soldiers and ex-munition workers who were unemployed to a weekly payment (the "dole") of twenty-five shillings. A comprehensive Unemployment Insurance Scheme was also drawn up to apply to almost all workers and to be supported on a contributory basis.

The fears of the Government that unemployment would be a serious problem immediately after the war proved groundless. Men and women were quickly absorbed in industry, for after the armistice Britain enjoyed a trade boom that lasted some eighteen months. It seemed as though the war, instead of leaving the country poorer than before, had opened up by some means a path to increasing prosperity. Twelve months after the armistice the number of unemployed in the country was about 350,000—negligible, in view of

the unemployed figures of later years. The Government framed comprehensive plans to create the land fit for heroes that had been promised during the war. It forgot that no country, just as no individual, can fling its fortune to the winds for four years, and still hope to continue indefinitely on a course of the same lavish spending. It set up new departments—Labour, Transport, Agriculture, Health—and, instead of cutting down expenditure, planned to employ Britain's resources to the full for the task of reconstruction.

The return to peace provoked an outburst of unrest among the workers. With the raising of the taboo against strikes, Labour considered that in 1919 the moment was opportune to use this weapon, either to consolidate the advantages it had gained during the war, or to make fresh demands for better working conditions. Throughout the year there was an epidemic of strikes. The spear-head of the Labour attack was the Triple Alliance of the three most powerful unions in the country, those of the miners, the railwaymen, and the transport workers. In January, 1919, these unions, acting in concert, tabled their demands. The railwaymen and the transport workers asked that the war bonuses they enjoyed should be made a permanent part of their pay, and their hours of work limited to eight daily. The miners went further. Besides increases in wages, they proposed that the State should pay full wages to unemployed miners, and that the mines should be nationalized—two claims that went outwith the bounds of industrial negotiation and were purely political in character. Moreover, the Miners' Union (its leaders at the time were Robert Smillie and Frank Hodges) was not prepared to wait, and threatened a strike on 17th March if its claims were not met. The Government managed to tide over this crisis by the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the position of the mining industry. This Commission, with Mr. Justice Sankey as chairman, produced an interim report on 20th March, on the basis of which the miners' pay was increased and their working hours reduced, two measures which satisfied them for a time. The final report of the Commission appeared in June. One of its recommendations, passed only by the casting vote of the chairman, was that the mines should be nationalized, but the Government was not prepared to accept this recommendation unconditionally, a refusal which embittered the miners. An uneasy peace was kept until April, 1921, however, except for a three weeks' strike in the autumn of 1920.

In September, 1919, there was a nine days' railway strike. This followed the breaking off of negotiations which had been going on

since the spring between the Railwaymen's Union (its leader was J. H. Thomas) and Sir Auckland Geddes. A "definitive" offer which Sir Auckland made was rejected by the railwaymen, who then declared a strike. Negotiations were speedily resumed, and eventually a settlement, by which wages were to be regulated on a sliding-scale basis, was agreed to. The transport workers also negotiated successfully with their employers, and by the end of the year the Miners' Union was the only member of the Triple Alliance that remained dissatisfied.

Throughout 1919 a feeling of optimism persisted in the country, despite a Budget deficit in April of over three hundred million pounds, for prosperity showed no signs of slackening. The Government approved of an elaborate and costly housing scheme, the work of Dr. Addison, Minister of Health. The need for houses was pressing. In April, 1919, Dr. Addison estimated that there was a shortage of houses for the workers to the number of 350,000. In addition, 300,000 houses were defective, and 70,000 entirely unfit.<sup>1</sup> Legislation to force local authorities to plan building schemes was passed, and Addison's Bill gave subsidies to builders to encourage the rapid construction of the necessary houses. An Agricultural Act appeared on the statute-book in 1920 to make permanent certain war-time measures adopted to help the rural population. It fixed corn prices in the interests of home producers, and also fixed a minimum wage for farm workers.

In the autumn of 1920 the wave of prosperity began to recede. In the summer the number of unemployed was 200,000; at the end of the year it was 700,000 and still rising. In November, 1920, prices started on a downward trend, and the air was heavy with the hint of serious industrial depression. The first cry of "squandermania" echoed throughout the country in censure of the Government's policy, and the opposition Press was soon to hurl this reproach with indignant voice at Lloyd George and his ministers. The Premier at the close of the Parliamentary session in August admitted that "navigation is difficult and dangerous", but urged his countrymen to "man the boat and save the nation", and assured them that "with a clear eye and a steady hand we will row through into calmer and bluer waters".<sup>2</sup> In December, 1920, the Unemployment Insurance Act, by which nearly all workers, except those engaged in farming, were insured on a contributory basis, came into operation. In January, 1921, the number of unemployed was one

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 114, 5th Series, p. 1713.

<sup>2</sup> *King George the Fifth*: Somervell.

million (it was to increase to two million by the summer) so that the Unemployment Insurance Scheme had no chance of being worked on sound actuarial lines. Such were the immediate demands made on the fund that it was bankrupt from the start, and the upkeep of the unemployed became a serious and steady drain on the Exchequer.

With a rapid fall in prices in 1921 the trade slump definitely arrived. Employers, faced with low prices and a shrinking market for their goods, demanded that labour costs, principally wages, should be reduced. An industrial fight followed, centred, as before, first of all in the coal-fields. At the beginning of 1921 the Government was still in "control" of the mines and responsible for the payment of a subsidy to keep the industry on its feet. It was decided to end control on 31st March, which was in advance of the date originally agreed to, namely, the last day of August. The coal-owners now offered the miners new terms, not on the basis of a national scheme such as had before been in operation, but to be arranged in individual districts. The miners refused this offer and, negotiation having failed to effect a settlement, went on strike on 1st April. The Government feared at first that the Triple Alliance might function in this dispute, and that the miners would get the support, in the way of a sympathetic strike, of the railway and transport workers, but the miners' allies did not support the strikers, who accordingly had to seek their own salvation. They resumed work on 4th July on the owners' terms, though a Government subsidy of ten million pounds eased for a time the wages cut.

With the failure of the miners to resist the attack of their employers, workers in almost all industries submitted to some reduction in wages. The Government threw overboard its elaborate plans, which involved lavish State spending, and became enthusiasts for retrenchment. The Housing Scheme was drastically amended, an act which led to the resignation of Dr. Addison. Unemployment benefit, which had been increased in the spring, was reduced in the summer. The guarantee given in the previous year to home farmers of a minimum price for their wheat and oats was withdrawn. Even then Government expenditure was felt to be too high, and a committee, under Sir Eric Geddes, was appointed to suggest what other cuts might legitimately be made. This committee sat in the winter of 1921 and the spring of 1922, and in its report proposed economies amounting to 86 million pounds. The Government effected a saving of 52 million, and to show how determined it was to spend less lavishly than before it voluntarily reduced the national revenue by

lowering the standard rate of income-tax from 6s. to 5s. in April, 1922.

In 1922 dissatisfaction with the Coalition Government, and in particular with Lloyd George, came to a head. The Conservatives were uneasy under the leadership of a Premier whose swift changes in policy kept them on tenter-hooks, and when Bonar Law, the junior partner to Lloyd George, withdrew from politics on account of ill-health in March, 1921, his followers were less willing than ever to continue in the wake of the Liberal master. Since Lloyd George himself spent a great deal of his time at conferences connected with the peace settlement, Bonar Law had held the arduous post of Leader of the House of Commons.

The Coalition Government had not proved too successful, and there was much which critics could recall to illustrate the Premier's failure both at home and abroad. The Russian expeditions,<sup>1</sup> which had cost the country about 100 million pounds, had antagonized the middle and lower classes. The settlement in Ireland<sup>2</sup> offended the Conservative die-hards. Even the Premier's friends felt that the Chanak incident<sup>3</sup> was a blow to the prestige of the Government, and that in its dealing with Nationalist Turkey little diplomacy and too much recklessness had been apparent. Finally, at home ugly rumours were current about the sale of honours in order to fill the party's money chest. By the autumn the tide was definitely running against the Premier. On 19th October, 1922, a meeting of Conservatives was convened in the Carlton Club by Austen Chamberlain, leader of the party in succession to Bonar Law, the purpose of which was to decide whether the Conservatives would continue to support Lloyd George or not. Austen Chamberlain himself wished to continue the Coalition, but the majority were in favour of breaking away from the Liberals. The speech of Stanley Baldwin, a comparatively unknown Minister, clarified the issue to many of his hearers. Baldwin emphasized that Lloyd George was a dynamic force, but "a dynamic force is a terrible thing", with power to smash the Conservative Party unless those who believed in upholding its unity broke away from this influence. The vote was taken, and by 187 to 87 the Conservatives decided to withdraw from the Coalition and to fight the next election as an independent party. Lloyd George immediately resigned, and Bonar Law, whose health had improved sufficiently for him to return to the House as a private member in the autumn, formed a ministry and then dissolved Parliament. A small group of Conservatives continued their support of

<sup>1</sup> See p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter XI.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 35.

Lloyd George and the Coalition. Among the leaders were Austen Chamberlain, Balfour, and Lord Birkenhead.

In the ensuing general election the Conservatives were returned with a clear majority over the other parties. They gained 344 seats; Labour had 142; Asquith's independent Liberals, 60; and Lloyd George's Liberals only 57. In November, 1922, Bonar Law took over the government with a group of ministers whom Birkenhead contemptuously called a "Cabinet of second-class brains". This was in one way a virtue, since the country was tired of experiment, of unexpected twists and turns of policy, and anxious for the tranquillity which Bonar Law promised it. As in America, "normalcy" (President Harding's word) seemed more worth while than "nos-trums".

The Conservatives were not expected to startle the electorate, but to rule with as little fuss as possible. In 1923 Neville Chamberlain, the Minister of Health, carried through Parliament a new Housing Act to provide houses in a much less costly way than Addison's Act did, mainly by subsidizing private building. In the same year a settlement of Britain's debt to America was drawn up. During the Great War Britain borrowed about 1000 million pounds from the U.S.A., and lent considerably more to her Allies. On 1st August, 1922, Lord Balfour addressed a note to the Allied Powers who were Britain's debtors, intimating that Britain wished to claim from them only the sum which she herself owed to the U.S.A., and adding that His Majesty's Government was prepared "to abandon all further right to German reparation and all claims to repayment by Allies provided that this renunciation formed part of a general plan by which this great problem could be dealt with as a whole and find a satisfactory solution". Balfour's note offended the Americans, who in the 'twenties insisted that reparation payments and war-debts should be treated apart. In 1923 Baldwin, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Bonar Law's Government, effected a settlement of the Anglo-American debt. He committed Britain to an annual payment for 62 years, starting at approximately 33 million pounds and rising later to 38 million. This was a settlement much more onerous than that arranged by the other Allies who owed war-debts to the U.S.A. The Premier thought at first of repudiating what his minister had done, but decided to remain silent and accept the agreement, though he realized that the burden which Britain had undertaken was not one that could be lightly borne.

In May, 1923, Bonar Law resigned, forced to do so by his ill-

health (he died in October of the same year), and the difficult question of choosing a successor arose. Lord Curzon, Foreign Secretary under Bonar Law, was the obvious choice, if ability and length and variety of service to the State were the main qualifications for the post. But Curzon in speech and manner was of the Victorian age, and did not fit into the post-war political scene. He had faults of temper, moreover, which had often offended his colleagues. He himself expected to be called to office. Instead, making the excuse that it was advisable to have a Commons man and not a peer as head of the Government, the Conservative leaders approved of Baldwin as an unpretentious but safe successor to Bonar Law. Few people knew much about Baldwin at the time. Contemporary opinion was expressed in these words:

"Eighteen months ago he was not a politician who could have been marked down in advance for the highest office, though credited with a full share of ability and character. . . .

"As an enlightened and successful employer, he understands and is not distrusted by Labour. The intellectual interests which are naturally suggested by his family connection with Burne-Jones and Kipling are an assurance against the limitations of the pure business view."<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn, however, many of the Conservative Party must have questioned the wisdom of their choice when Baldwin appealed to the country on the issue of tariff reform. This had always been in the forefront of the Conservative programme, but many of the party felt no doubt that it would have been better to consolidate their position before risking an election so soon on this vexed question. Baldwin, however, was convinced that industry needed Protection, for only by this means did it seem possible to reduce the unemployed figure, which had now reached 1,300,000, and to relieve the State of part at least of the burden of the "dole". Since the armistice 400 million pounds had been expended in this unproductive way.

The general election, while it was creditable to Baldwin's honesty and clearness of purpose, was politically disastrous to the Conservative Party. As in 1906, the defence of Free Trade again became a rallying cry in the constituencies, and Baldwin's plea for even a limited measure of Protection for industry was rejected. Asquith and Lloyd George sank their differences in order to resist this

<sup>1</sup> *Round Table*, September, 1923.

The Premier reached the man in the street, who was indifferent to his intellectual attainments, by his love of the country (and of pigs) and his well-publicized briar pipe.

attack on one of the main principles of the Liberal Party. With the adherence of Labour to this same principle of Free Trade, the Conservatives' opponents won a resounding victory. Labour gained 191 seats, the Liberals had 158, and the Conservatives 258. Although still the largest party in the House, the Conservatives could be, and were, outvoted by the opposition. Baldwin remained in office till January, 1924, and then Labour for the first time in the history of Britain formed a Government, with Liberal support.

The Prime Minister was Ramsay MacDonald, an experienced campaigner in the turmoil of both trade union and party politics. He had in his Cabinet men with trade union experience, some of whom, moreover, had held office in one or other of the Coalition Governments formed during the Great War. Such were Arthur Henderson, J. R. Clynes, and J. H. Thomas. His Chancellor of the Exchequer was Philip Snowden, a sound and orthodox economist. The only man of extreme views who entered the Cabinet was John Wheatley, appointed Minister of Health. There was little of the revolutionary element in the Labour Government, and none in the policy which it followed. It was dependent for its existence on the favour of the Liberals, so that no programme of definitely Socialist measures could possibly have been carried out. In any case MacDonald and the trade union leaders were wedded to the idea of gradualism,<sup>1</sup> and were as open to attack from the extremists of their own party as from their opponents on the Right. MacDonald kept in his own hands the control of foreign affairs, and gained a personal triumph by his successful handling of the negotiations which ended with the general acceptance of the Dawes Plan<sup>2</sup> at the London Reparation Conference in August, 1924.

In domestic affairs the only notable piece of legislation was Wheatley's Housing Bill, which supplemented that of Neville Chamberlain by providing local authorities with subsidies from the rates to build working-class houses for renting. Snowden repealed the McKenna Duties, which had been imposed in war time on imported motor-cars and some other manufactured goods and retained since then, thereby proving his unswerving allegiance to the gospel of Free Trade. The Government showed its Labour bias by increasing the benefits given to the workless, but it produced no cure for unemployment. In certain matters of importance the Labour ministers

<sup>1</sup> "There is to-day no Toryism more fearful and immovable than that which is enshrined in the ideals and practice of trade union leadership." (A. J. Cummings.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 56.



seemed undecided about what course to follow. They were reproached by some of their supporters for laying down five new cruisers (*The Times* congratulated them "in rising above the deep-rooted prejudices of many among their adherents"), while, on the other hand, they offended the Conservatives by suspending work on the naval base at Singapore. The Government's relations with the Liberals were not too happy. The Liberals were eager for electoral reform—proportional representation, for example—to give them a number of seats in the House corresponding to their strength in the country, but Labour was not anxious for any change in the franchise which would increase the influence of a third party.

The presence of a Labour administration at Westminster did not bring industrial peace in Britain. There was a spate of strikes during the year, the principal ones being those of the railwaymen, the dockers, and the London transport workers. Labour discovered that its leaders were now less sympathetic to strikes than they had been when in opposition. The Cabinet was ready to declare, if necessary, a state of emergency, and to make use of the powers conferred by the Emergency Powers Act. Asquith had been right when he assured the doubters that a Labour Government "with its claws cut" need cause no undue alarm, and that "we still sleep more or less comfortably in our beds".

MacDonald gave official recognition to the Soviet Government and started discussions about a commercial treaty. The negotiations broke down on the question of the Soviet's responsibility for the payment of moneys due to British investors in Tsarist Russia, in property, for example, nationalized by the Bolsheviks. The Soviet representatives would not admit this liability, and indeed tabled counter-claims for damage done by the British in their period of intervention in the Russian Civil War. Negotiations were broken off on 5th August. On the following day, however, they were resumed and the actual draft of a treaty speedily prepared. This surprisingly rapid result was due, it was suspected, to the prompting of the Labour back-benchers, who, when the Government assumed office, formed a kind of Executive Council to watch carefully the policy of their leaders, and to urge them on the direct Socialist road if they seemed to be lingering in a by-way. Particularly objectionable to the Conservatives and Liberals was the promise in the treaty of a loan to Russia. This was made despite an assurance given some months before by MacDonald that in no circumstances would a British loan be given to the Soviet. There were so many

conditions to be fulfilled prior to the loan (one of them was that 50 per cent of British bondholders had to be satisfied with the compensation offered them by the Soviet), that there did not seem much chance of its ever being made. But both Liberals and Conservatives were dissatisfied. Despite their objections the treaty was signed on 7th August, 1924.

Parliament rose, and when it reassembled on 30th September, the Labour Government was attacked on another issue. A prosecution had been started against R. J. Campbell, the acting editor of the *Workers' Weekly*, for the publication of a seditious article, and then suddenly dropped. Campbell and his friends insisted that the Government had been forced to this action by pressure from their supporters. Both Conservatives and Liberals were by this time tired of the Labour Government. Perhaps MacDonald himself thought that Labour, having proved its ability to govern, might well take its *congé* before more serious difficulties arose, as they were bound to do, with the Liberals. In the House the Government gave an unconvincing explanation of why the case against Campbell was abandoned.<sup>1</sup> A resolution to appoint a Select Committee to investigate the matter was carried, and MacDonald, having warned the House that an adverse vote would lead to dissolution, carried out his threat.

In the ensuing election in October a mysterious letter alleged to have been sent to the Communist Party of Britain and signed by Zinoviev, President of the Third Communist International, played a part. Published in the Press just before voting day, it was declared by some to be a forgery (actually only copies of the original letter were ever produced), while Liberals and Conservatives vociferously pointed out how damaging it was to their Labour opponents. It was all rather vague, and little more than a stunt—with what influence on the election it was difficult to judge. The letter said nothing which had not been said often before by Communists both in Britain and Russia. Among other points it urged that "the proletariat of Great Britain, which pronounced its weighty word when danger threatened of a break-off of the past negotiations, and compelled the Government of MacDonald to conclude the Treaty, must

<sup>1</sup> To justify the dropping of the case against Campbell, the Attorney-General spoke of him as a young man, believed to be of excellent character, who was not in the regular employment of the newspaper in question, and whose responsibility was limited, since he had neither written nor composed the article. Moreover, Campbell had a military record that was exceptionally good. He had been severely wounded and incapacitated for life, and had gained the Military Medal. (*Hansard*, Vol. 177, 5th Series, p. 9.)

show the greatest possible energy in the further struggle for ratification, and against the endeavours of British Capitalists to compel Parliament to annul it". In another paragraph the letter recommended Communists "to have cells in all the units of the troops, particularly among those quartered in the large centres of the country, and also among factories working on munitions and at military and store depots". The advantage of this, it was pointed out, was that "in the event of war . . . it is possible to paralyse all the military preparations of the *bourgeoisie*, and make a start in turning an imperialist war into a class war". But such was the stuff of propaganda which the Comintern had been turning out since 1920. Somervell wrote that "it is doubtful if it (the Zinoviev letter) affected the result of the election as much as Labour apologists like to think. The notion that it was the prime cause of the overwhelming Conservative victory, which followed it, is quite preposterous".<sup>1</sup> The overwhelming victory gave the Conservatives 413 seats; Labour retained 151, while the Liberals returned only 40 members to the House.

<sup>1</sup> *King George the Fifth.*

## CHAPTER XV

### GREAT BRITAIN, 1925-31

BALDWIN'S second period of office as Prime Minister opened with a complete reunion in the Conservative ranks. The ministers who had remained faithful to Lloyd George when the Coalition was broken up in 1922 now returned to their own party. Austen Chamberlain became Foreign Secretary; Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India; and Balfour, President of the Council. Winston Churchill, who had for a brief period reverted to Liberalism in the election at the end of 1923 and had suffered defeat at the poll, also rejoined the Conservatives and became Chancellor of the Exchequer. While Churchill made no attempt to carry out any strict policy of Protection, the McKenna duties were restored at the first opportunity, and also a mildly protective Safeguarding of Industries Bill passed—Lloyd George's Coalition Government had passed a similar Bill. The purpose of the Act was to safeguard, under very stringent conditions, any important industry which was threatened by serious foreign competition.

The Conservatives looked to a revival of foreign trade to lessen the industrial depression in Britain. To encourage foreign trade to flow freely, and also to give back to London its pre-war position as banking centre of the world, Churchill in 1925 restored the gold standard, which had been abandoned in the war years. A country on the gold standard promises to give on demand a definite weight of gold for its bank-notes. Foreigners can trade with such a country with confidence, knowing exactly what their commitments will be, since there is little fluctuation in the value of the country's money once it is tied to gold. Unfortunately the gold standard was restored at a pre-war level, which proved to be much too high. "In effect the value of the pound sterling, the medium of exchange for British exports and imports, had suddenly been raised 10 per cent in relation to the principal foreign currencies."<sup>1</sup> The result was that foreign buyers of British goods had to pay 10 per cent more for them, and

<sup>1</sup> *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth: Spender.*

this caused an immediate fall in Britain's exports, while foreigners could now sell their goods at 10 per cent less than before to British importers.

The decline in the exports of coal again brought to a head the recurrent conflict between mine-owner and mine-worker. On 30th June, 1925, the mine-owners gave notice to their employees of the termination in a month's time of existing agreements, and offered new terms—lower wages and a return to the eight-hour day. These terms, "which would have reduced coal-mining in the worse-paid districts to the level of a sweated industry",<sup>1</sup> were rejected. The miners, while admitting that the industry could not afford high wages, contended that the fault lay at the door of the mine-owners themselves. A Court of Inquiry which the Government constituted in July supported this point of view. A French observer, André Siegfried, also censured the "irrational organization" of the coal industry. He wrote:

"In England there are 1400 independent coal producers operating 2000 pits, whereas in France we have 130 companies with 600 pits, and in Westphalia a dozen companies control nine-tenths of the production.

"As is to be expected, instead of concentrating on the better pits, each English coalowner obstinately insists on working his own property, no matter how poor it may be. . . . The existence of semi-mediæval pits, which are just able to carry on, acts as a drag on the whole industry, and injures the good pits which are equipped with the latest machinery. . . .

"In view of the loss of the foreign markets, a collective selling organization is needed, but how can unity of action be obtained from hundreds of separate companies which have never co-operated in the past?"<sup>2</sup>

Matters hung fire in July, with Baldwin insisting that no State subsidy could possibly be granted. At the end of July he announced that the Government had decided to grant a subsidy for nine months, so that the miners might retain their old rates of pay while a Royal Commission investigated thoroughly every aspect of the coal industry. The crisis was thus postponed at the cost of 24 million pounds—the amount of the subsidy which the Government paid.

The Commission, with Sir Herbert Samuel as chairman, made its report on 11th March, 1926. It was accepted by the Government.<sup>3</sup> Its main proposals were that the miners should receive reduced wages, though not such drastic reductions as suggested by the owners,

<sup>1</sup> *King George the Fifth*: Somervell.      <sup>2</sup> *England's Crisis*.

<sup>3</sup> The Government's acceptance was guarded. It promised "to give effect to such of the proposals in the Report as we believe will be of benefit to the industry". (*Hansard*, Vol. 195, 5th Series, p. 88.)

and that the mine-owners should take immediate steps to reorganize the industry. The need for this reorganization was emphasized. The miners' leaders refused to accept the recommendation of reduced pay, arguing that, since the mine-owners were responsible for the uneconomic position of the industry, the workers should not be made to suffer even temporarily for the mistakes and neglect of their masters. The miners' slogan, "Not a cent off the pay, not a minute on the day", did not give much scope for negotiation, but attempts were made in April to reach a compromise. The Government's subsidy was due to end on 30th April, and no settlement had been reached by then. Meanwhile the Miners' Federation had been promised the full support of the other trade unions, and on 1st May the Trade Union Council decided to declare a General Strike to begin at midnight on 3rd May. Negotiations still continued, but these were broken off by the Government when machine workers refused to print a copy of the *Daily Mail* unless an article which condemned the strike as "a revolutionary movement intended to inflict suffering upon the great mass of innocent persons in the community" was deleted. The strike duly started on 4th May, and was called off on 12th May.

While Baldwin and others in the Government had been anxious to effect a peaceful settlement of the dispute, it was suggested that die-hards in the Cabinet—Churchill and Birkenhead, for example—were not unwilling to force the issue, in order to challenge the strength of the organized workers in the country. On the side of Labour, Arthur Cook, the miners' leader, was representative of a number keen to force the hand of the Government, but many responsible trade unionists were dismayed by the declaration of a General Strike. Ramsay MacDonald had called it, before this, the last refuge of an idiot, and, while the strike was in progress, Thomas declared that he had never believed in the principle of it.

The majority of the organized workers in the country obeyed the orders of their leaders to strike, but those in essential services, such as lighting and sanitation, were instructed to remain at work. The Government had the whip-hand through its control of broadcasting, and by the publication of the *British Gazette*, which, under the able direction of Churchill, had a circulation of 2 million before the end of the strike. After a day or two the main London and provincial papers made an appearance in attenuated form. The strikers had a paper of their own, the *British Worker*, issued by the T.U.C., but its influence on middle-class opinion was small in

comparison with that of the Government's publication. The Government placed troops at strategic points throughout the country, enrolled 250,000 special constables, and organized an army of volunteers for all kinds of work. Within a day or two skeleton train, bus, and other services were in operation. The strikers on the whole were orderly, although there were individual outbursts in different parts of the country. "There was indeed some exaggeration of the orderliness of the country as a whole," wrote Somervell, "and it was rather a shock to learn, next month, that there had been during May, in England and Wales, 1760 prosecutions for incitement to sedition and 1389 for actual violence."<sup>1</sup>

The Labour leaders were soon in a difficult and humiliating position. Once the General Strike had started, their main desire was to get it finished as soon as possible. Baldwin gave them no help. He insisted that, as the strike was in the nature of a conspiracy against the constitution of the country, it would have to be called off unconditionally before the Government would resume any negotiations with the men's leaders. Worse was to follow. Sir John Simon declared in a speech in the Commons that the General Strike was illegal and that all the strikers were individually liable for damages.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation of trade union law was supported by Mr. Justice Astbury a few days later, but other lawyers, including Sir Henry Slessor, challenged it. Eventually the trade union leaders were thankful for a rather weak bridge which Sir Herbert Samuel built to allow them with some show of dignity to approach the Government and agree to call off the strike. Actually the proposals which Sir Herbert made ("likely to promote a settlement in the coal industry") were entirely unofficial; nevertheless the T.U.C. leaders seized this straw to get themselves out of their difficulties. Baldwin made it plain that in his view the surrender was unconditional. The nine days' strike failed completely. The men returned to work, many of them to worse conditions than before. The miners refused to give in, and continued their battle alone until November, when they accepted the owners' terms. During the last few months of the strike, the miners, their own funds depleted by this time, were helped by voluntary contributions from the public, and from Russia a million pounds was sent in instalments to show the Soviet workers' sympathy with the cause.

One important echo of the General Strike was the passing into law of a Trade Disputes Bill in 1927 to make illegal all strikes other

<sup>1</sup> *King George the Fifth.*    <sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 195, 5th Series, pp. 583-588.

than those with a clear industrial aim. Minor and rather irritating provisions against trade unions were incorporated into the Act. Commenting on these, Spender said: "But by forbidding the sympathetic strike, making picketing at the home a criminal offence, and changing the conditions of the political levy (contracting-in was substituted for contracting-out), the Government seemed to be going beyond the immediate necessities and using the occasion for a counter-attack on Labour."<sup>1</sup> This at least was the feeling which Labour had, and the 1927 Act rallied to the trade union movement a good deal of the support it had lost among the workers after the General Strike.

A minor echo of the strike was the resignation of Asquith from the leadership of the Liberal Party. During the strike most of the Liberals had stood by the Government; only Lloyd George was critical of its handling of the situation. Asquith felt that the personal antagonism which was reputed to exist between himself and Lloyd George tended to emphasize differences of policy between them, and to cause even greater disintegration in the party than had already occurred. After a serious illness in the summer he decided in September to announce his resignation as leader of the party. He died in February, 1928.

In 1927 the best known of Baldwin's ministers was for a time Sir William Joynson-Hicks ("Jix"), who was featured in the popular Government Press by reason of his persistent attacks on Russia and on the Soviet's alleged propagandist activity in Britain. The headquarters of the Russian Trade Agency (Arcos) in London was said to be the centre of this subversive propaganda. A secret document disappeared from the War Office, and this was made the pretext for a police raid on Arcos, with the blowing open of a safe (the delegation claiming diplomatic privilege refused to hand over the keys) and the discovery of nothing incriminating. This did not daunt Jix, but convinced him that the Russians were even more crafty than he had imagined. He found evidence of their nefarious activities in a photostatic apparatus which was discovered, "and at work on it a man known to be a Secret Service agent of the Soviet Government". The Russian Trade Agency wound up its affairs and left for home.

In 1928 a Fifth Franchise Act was passed giving the vote to women over 21, and placing them therefore on the same footing as men. The extension of the privilege of voting, which started with

<sup>1</sup> *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth.*



the First Reform Act of 1832, now reached, presumably, its democratic limit. In the same year an important Derating Scheme was approved by the Government. It relieved agriculture entirely, and industry of three-quarters, of the burden of local rates. Local authorities were compensated for the loss of this revenue by grants from the Treasury. The purpose of the scheme was to encourage agriculture and to develop local industry, thereby leading to increased employment. The Government also passed a Local Government Act to improve the administration of the Poor Law.

Both in 1927 and 1928 considerable controversy arose over a Revised English Prayer Book, which received the official approval of the Church, but which was on two occasions rejected by the Commons. Jix entered the lists as a sturdy champion of Protestantism, and attacked the practice of "reserving the sacrament", which the new Prayer Book legalized, as a surrender to the Anglo-Catholics in the Church. The Church of England had just cause for complaint, since the book was rejected in the Commons by "an English minority, supported by the representatives of Scotland, Wales, and Ulster, homes of a sturdy Protestantism where the writ of Canterbury did not run".<sup>1</sup> The Church accepted Parliament's decision, but Anglo-Catholics continued to "reserve the sacrament" without interference.

A general election was fought in 1929, and Baldwin's Government faced the country confidently. Churchill's Budgets had been received with general approval. The Government was conscious (its mood was almost one of complacency) of having legislated during its five years of office conscientiously and well; it had to its credit the management of the General Strike, the Derating Scheme, the new Franchise Act, and so on. Baldwin proposed to continue with a policy of "Safety First", but he misjudged the temper of the constituencies. Unemployment was in the neighbourhood of a million and a half, and the electorate wished some more adventurous policy, or at least the promise of such a policy, to deal with this urgent problem. In their attitude towards the "distressed areas"—districts in South Wales, the north of England, and West Scotland, where there had been since 1921 continuous economic depression and persistent unemployment—Baldwin's ministers had seemed somewhat apathetic. The Conservatives found that their hold on the country had weakened. They lost many seats, their number in the House being reduced to 260. The Liberals gained only 59

<sup>1</sup> *King George the Fifth*: Somervell.

seats, and Labour, with 289, was the largest party, but again it could take office only with Liberal support.

In May, 1929, MacDonald formed his second Cabinet, selecting his followers mainly from the Right wing of Labour. Wheatley was excluded from office. Snowden again became Chancellor of the Exchequer, Henderson was Foreign Secretary, and Clynes Home Secretary. A woman joined the Cabinet; this was Miss Margaret Bondfield, appointed Minister of Labour. She had served an apprenticeship as Under-Secretary in the same department in the first Labour Government.

The unemployment problem that faced Britain in 1929 was one that did not seem easy of solution. While the U.S.A. was enjoying a general trade boom in 1928-29, the depression which had settled on Britain's heavy industry and the textile manufactures showed no signs of lifting. Of the men normally engaged in mining and engineering only a quarter were at work. Four-fifths of the workers in ship-building yards were idle. The only factories which seemed to be working at full pressure were those recently established which produced articles of a luxury or semi-luxury type, such as wireless receivers, artificial silk, &c. Britain's industry as a whole (especially the coal, iron, and steel trades) was weighed down by out-of-date equipment, and its organization was faulty. After an investigation into Britain's industrial plant, Siegfried<sup>1</sup> condemned the average industrialist as "simply a middle-class Englishman, insular and imbued with all the prejudices of his class. He clings to the old British idea that discipline and practical experience are better than technique." The same author wrote:

"The cotton industry is equally attached to the methods of the past. Its organization has scarcely changed since the second half of the last century. . . . In this case depression is caused more by the antiquated system as a whole than by the state of the plant. . . .

"What is needed is a general reorganization, which will take into account the new conditions in manufacturing and world competition. The period of scattered individualism is passed. To succeed to-day it is necessary to work with large units which will assure effective co-operation, not merely within any one section of the industry, but also with the various other sections."

The Labour Government had at first no doubts at all about its ability to solve problems which had baffled the Conservatives. On the eve of forming his Cabinet, MacDonald said to an interviewer:

<sup>1</sup> *England's Crisis.*

"In our first session we shall deal with unemployment and will bring relief and hope to the workers of this land."<sup>1</sup> To J. H. Thomas, appointed to a special Ministry for Unemployment, was given the task of solving this problem. As one of his helpers he had Sir Oswald Mosley. Thomas was not credited with, and did not claim to have, any special knowledge of economics. He gave the impression that he was something of a wizard, and that with a wave of his magic wand unemployment would vanish. He made a trip to Canada, which was much publicized, but no one seemed to know what he intended to do there or what he actually did. He assured the sceptics that he had a lot of things up his sleeve, but a speech which he delivered in the House of Commons in October with the long-awaited solution for unemployment was a fiasco. For the next few months he reiterated that everything would soon be all right. He assured his hearers that Britain was pulling through, that every cloud had a silver lining, that the day was dawning, the tide turning, the worst past, and the bottom of the depression in sight.<sup>2</sup> "After eleven months of this sort of thing, unemployment figures had risen from 1,100,000 to 1,700,000, and Mr. Thomas was transferred to the Dominions Office."<sup>2</sup>

Mosley had a plan of his own to cure unemployment (mainly an extensive scheme of public works) which he set down in a memorandum and presented to the Government for consideration. It was rejected by Thomas and the rest of the Cabinet, and Mosley resigned—he held the sinecure post of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Now he started to organize a new group of adherents, which numbered but five in the House. In September, 1932, Mosley took a more adventurous step. He cut himself off completely from the recognized parties, and became the leader of the British Union of Fascists (B.U.F.), with the Italo-German accompaniments of militant stewards, black shirts, demagogic utterance, right-hand salute, anti-Semitism, and so on.

The Government during this time kept on more friendly terms with its Liberal allies than it had done in 1924. It even consented to the setting up of a Parliamentary Committee to examine the question of electoral reform. Moreover, there was no Vigilance Committee of back-benchers allowed to interfere with the plans of the leaders. But there was little hope in 1930-31 for the survival of any Labour Government, no matter how strong it was. The

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Post-War History of the British Working Class* by Allen Hutt.

<sup>2</sup> *King George the Fifth*: Somervell.

effects of the world economic depression, which started in 1929, became visible in Britain in 1930-31, and would have neutralized any radical plans for economic restoration, even if Labour had been able to produce these from its sleeve. By the end of 1930 the number of unemployed was  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million. This rose till it reached its peak, 3 million, in 1933.

In February, 1931, Snowden, discussing the grave financial situation of the country, assured the Commons that Britain's position was "fundamentally sound, sounder than that of any other country in the world", but that, to surmount the "temporary crisis", an effort which would involve "sacrifices from all" was required.<sup>1</sup> A committee, under Sir George May, was appointed to examine the nation's expenditure. Its report, published in July, declared that it was necessary to make economies to the tune of 96½ million pounds, mainly by cuts in wages and unemployment benefits, if the Budget for 1931-32 was to be balanced.<sup>2</sup> By this time the weakness of Britain's financial position, exposed in the Macmillan Report in the middle of July, had caused a run by foreign creditors on the Bank of England's gold reserves. The weakness of Britain's finance lay in this, that banking houses in London had borrowed a great deal of money from foreign investors on short-term loans, but this had been lent to other countries on long-term loans. These short-term loans were now being recalled, and the drain on gold from Britain became serious.<sup>3</sup>

In July, 1931, the Bank of England had to borrow 50 million pounds from New York and Paris. This proved insufficient, and in August a further demand—this time for 80 million—was made. American bankers were prepared to make this loan, but only on condition that measures were taken to cut down the national expenditure, particularly the cost of Unemployment Insurance. The Labour Cabinet being unwilling to reduce the unemployed benefits, MacDonald on 23rd August tendered his own and his colleagues' resignation to the king. It was generally thought by the Labour

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 248, 5th Series, p. 449.

<sup>2</sup> The May Report recommended the reduction of unemployment benefit by 20 per cent, an increase in the weekly contributions, &c. By these means the State liability would be reduced by 66½ million pounds. By reducing the pay of civil servants, teachers, the police, &c., a further 4½ million pounds would be saved. (Cmd. 3920, 1931, pp. 215-217.)

<sup>3</sup> "All this may be summed up by saying that there is much more risk than there used to be of our financing long-term investment by means of attracting short-term foreign funds of a precarious character, and thus gradually slipping into a less liquid position than is desirable." (Macmillan Report, Cmd. 3897, 1931, p. 150.)

Party that Baldwin would be asked to form a Government. Instead, MacDonald agreed to become the leader of a National Government, with representatives of all parties, in order to convince foreign opinion of Britain's united determination to set her house in order. Three of MacDonald's colleagues—Snowden, Thomas, and Lord Sankey—joined the new Cabinet; four other Labour members, including the Prime Minister's son, accepted minor office. But 95 per cent of the Labour members in the House repudiated MacDonald's action as a betrayal of the party. C. R. Attlee considered that MacDonald's readiness to combine with Conservative and Liberal ministers was the inevitable outcome of a breach between the leader and his followers which had gradually grown wider. Attlee wrote:<sup>1</sup>

"He had for some years been more and more attracted by the social environment of the well-to-do classes. He had got more and more out of touch with the rank and file of the Party, while the adulation which is almost inseparable from the necessary publicity given to the leader of a great movement had gone to his head and increased his natural vanity. The philosophy of gradualness which he had always maintained became almost indistinguishable from Conservatism, while his innate disinclination to take the necessary executive decisions made him readily accept the impossibility of any serious challenge to the powers that be."<sup>2</sup>

The first task of the National Government was to introduce, in September, a supplementary Budget increasing taxation, and an Economy Bill which made cuts in official salaries and unemployment benefits. It was hoped that these measures would restore confidence in Britain's ability to pay her way, and that the drain of gold from London would cease. This did not happen, however. Foreigners continued to withdraw their deposits, all the more eagerly when rumours of a mutiny of the fleet at Invergordon leaked out. This was a "strike" of the sailors of the Atlantic Fleet, who, when they were told of cuts made in their pay, refused to put to sea for exercises on 15th September. According to Kenneth Edwards,<sup>3</sup> a prime factor which caused the mutiny was incredible administrative muddling; the men were kept too long in ignorance of the cuts in pay that were to be imposed, and of the need for them. The same authority says that another factor was the presence among the crews of some disaffected men linked with Communist organizations.

The men behaved with restraint, drew up a memorandum to be

<sup>1</sup> *The Labour Party in Perspective.*

<sup>2</sup> A Liberal point of view was expressed by Spender: "MacDonald showed courage and character in making a clean cut."

<sup>3</sup> *The Mutiny at Invergordon.*

submitted to the Admiralty, and loyally implored the Lords and Commissioners "to amend the drastic cuts in pay which have been inflicted on the lowest-paid men of the lower deck. It is evident to all concerned that these cuts are a forerunner of tragedy, misery and immorality among the families of the lower deck, and unless a guaranteed written agreement is received from the Admiralty, confirmed by Parliament, stating that our pay will be revised, we are still to remain as one unit, refusing to serve under the new rates of pay. The men are quite agreeable to accept a cut which they consider within reason". The justice of their complaint was admitted, the guaranteed written agreement came to hand, and the mutiny was over.

But the drain on London continued, and on 21st September the Government announced that the gold standard was suspended. Before this happened everyone imagined that the suspension of the gold standard would be a grave disaster for Britain. In August MacDonald said: "If there were any collapse in the pound we should be defaulting on our obligations to the rest of the world. Our credit would be gone."<sup>1</sup> He emphasized that the commerce and well-being of Britain and the rest of the world rested on well-founded confidence in sterling. A fortnight later the Prime Minister insisted that had it not been for the measures taken by the National Government sterling would have fallen to 10s. in a night. A week after Britain went off the gold standard the value of the pound in terms of francs had fallen to 14s. 6d. But Britain survived, and in fact industrialists throughout the country proceeded to congratulate the Government on a measure which gave a considerable fillip to their export trade.

In October, 1931, a general election was held. It was a triumph for the National Government, for their supporters were returned to the number of 558, against 56 opposition Labour members. Of the Government seats, 471 were gained by Conservatives. A tiny group of 13 National Labour members stood behind MacDonald and his Labour colleagues who continued to serve in the Ministry.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the Macmillan Report, p. 111. "But it would be to adopt an entirely new principle, and one which would undoubtedly be an immense shock to the international financial world, if the Government of the greatest creditor nation were deliberately and by an act of positive policy to announce one morning that it had reduced by law the value of its currency from the par at which it was standing to some lower value."

## CHAPTER XVI

### BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS

**I**N the years before the Great War the relationship between Great Britain and the main self-governing Dominions (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa), which had never for long remained static, was altering under the influence of two well-defined tendencies. Among the peoples of the Dominions there was a growing desire for complete independence in matters which affected their internal life. They had received self-government, Canada as early as the 'forties of the nineteenth century, but they were not entirely free from the legal interference of the mother country. On the other hand, Dominion statesmen were beginning to realize how necessary it was to have closer co-operation than before between Britain and the Dominions in matters affecting the Empire as a whole. In one aspect of their life the Dominions demanded independence; in another they sought co-operation.

From 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, till 1914, Imperial Conferences were held at irregular intervals, but these had merely advisory powers, and if recommendations were made they had to be implemented by the individual Governments whose representatives attended the conference. A change occurred during the Great War when Dominion statesmen attended the Imperial War Cabinet, and shared with their colleagues in Great Britain the responsibility for the policy adopted. They realized then that, even when hostilities came to an end, it would be necessary to follow a unified Imperial policy if the best was to be made of the Empire. But the war tended also to emphasize the independence of the Dominions. The Dominions became conscious of their individuality, of the sovereign status which each could claim, and this received open recognition when Dominion statesmen attended the Paris Peace Conference, with the right to give opinions or to support measures independent of Britain. When the Versailles Treaty was signed it was apparent to all the world that the British Empire had undergone a third transformation. When it was first built Britain had

demanding from her dependencies absolute obedience, in theory at least; then, as the colonies grew up, the chains which bound them to Britain had been loosened; now in maturity the Dominions could claim to be on an equality with the country which gave them birth, able to look after their own interests and resentful of any interference.

Various incidents which happened in the 'twenties emphasized the change in the relationship between Britain and her self-governing colonies. At the time of the Chanak crisis, for example, when Lloyd George addressed an appeal for assistance to the Dominions if the Turk proved obdurate and started war against Britain, only Australia and New Zealand seemed willing to act, and even then Australia's agreement was weakened by certain reservations. Canada and South Africa showed no eagerness to restart war. Fortunately the issue did not arise, but it became plain then that, if Britain was engaged in war, the Dominions would themselves decide whether to take part in the struggle or not.

In 1923 Britain acknowledged the right of the Dominions to appoint envoys to foreign countries, and to negotiate and sign treaties through these envoys. When Austen Chamberlain affixed his signature to the Rhineland Pact (part of the Locarno Settlement) in 1926, he represented only Great Britain, and it was specifically stated that the Dominions were not bound by this treaty unless they themselves voluntarily undertook the obligation. None of them did so.

The peculiar status of the Dominions required definition, and this task was attempted at an Imperial Conference held in 1926. It was agreed that the Empire was something which defied classification, since it bore no resemblance to any union of states that had before existed. The relationship between Britain and her Dominions was defined in these words: "They are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."

With this critics had to be content. Its vagueness was typical of the empirical attitude which Britain adopts most easily in her relations with other peoples. Unlike the French, British statesmen (in peace-time) hesitate to step firmly on a straight, logical path, with some objective clearly in view. They wait, instead, to tackle difficulties as they occur, and change and chop their policy to suit the varying international breeze. All sorts of questions arose from



the definition quoted. If Great Britain made war on an enemy, could Canada, say, declare her neutrality and take no part in the struggle? Would Britain's enemy recognize neutrality in these circumstances? Again, what situation would arise if Canada allied herself, as she could legally do, with a neighbour, and joined in hostilities against a third power? How far would Britain then be involved? These questions, said students of Imperial history, are best left unanswered. If a difficult situation arose, the British flair for compromise would find some solution.

To give legal force to the independence which the Imperial Conference of 1926 had proclaimed, the Statute of Westminster was passed in 1931. Britain could no longer legislate for a Dominion without its consent; nor could she interfere with the laws which a Dominion passed in its own interests. The last vestiges of Britain's control were abolished.

While the political and constitutional bonds of the Empire were thus loosened, an attempt to bind more closely the economic interests of Britain and her Dominions was made at Ottawa in July-August, 1932. The vision of a thorough scheme of Imperial Preference had been one that had attracted many of the Conservative Party since the days of Joseph Chamberlain. But in the early 'thirties Britain and her Dominions were not prepared to sacrifice unduly their foreign markets; nor were the Dominion industrialists, particularly in Canada, willing to favour the British manufacturer by reducing, to any substantial degree, the tariffs which protected their new industries. "The Ottawa Conference proved," wrote Hampden Jackson, "that even in a crisis the British Empire could not combine in any real economic unit."<sup>1</sup> As an outcome of the conference the Dominions agreed to increase the tariffs on certain imports from foreign countries, while leaving untouched the duty on these same products from British markets; thereby Britain was granted a preferential tariff—it varied in the different Dominions. In return for this concession Britain promised to impose no tariff on Empire goods which were at the time of the conference admitted duty-free to the country, and, moreover, to impose fresh duties on certain imports (wheat, maize, &c.) from foreign countries. The agreements were to run for five years.

In the post-war years the Dominions experienced on the whole the same trade-cycle as the rest of the world: prosperity for a brief period, then the depression of 1921, and a gradual improvement in

<sup>1</sup> *The Post-War World*.

trade until the world slump and the disastrous fall in the prices of primary goods in 1929-31. Australia suffered severely from the fall in the price-level. In 1927-28 the value of her wool exports was 66 million pounds; in 1931-32 she received only 35 million pounds.<sup>1</sup> Both Australia and Canada built up home industries after the war, and protected them by tariffs, which were largely increased after the slump. In Australia in 1929-31 a Labour Federal Government was in power under J. H. Scullin. It failed to restore the economic equilibrium of the country, and in 1932 a Conservative administration with J. A. Lyons at its head took office. Lyons carried out an orthodox financial policy, while still maintaining the high tariffs which his predecessors had introduced. A policy of protective tariffs was also one followed by the Conservatives in Canada, who under R. B. Bennett ousted the Liberals in 1930 at a time of very serious unemployment and took office.

In South Africa the antagonism between the British and Boer populations was in the 'twenties a political matter of importance. The National (Dutch) Party, whose leader was General Hertzog, wished to emphasize the Dutch character of the Dominion, and its independence of Britain. The South African Party, on the other hand, was the one which represented British interests in the country. Its leader was Smuts, who became Prime Minister in 1919 in succession to Botha. Hertzog's party, with the support of a Labour group, defeated their opponents in 1924, and held office from then until 1933. In 1925 Hertzog proclaimed Afrikaans the official language of the Union. After the declaration made by the Inter-Imperial Relations Committee of the 1926 Imperial Conference defining the relationship between Britain and the Dominions, anti-British feeling died down in South Africa, and the main issue which separated the two parties was the problem of the natives. The Dutch wished to keep the natives politically helpless, with little opportunity of education—the hewers of wood and the drawers of water for the white minority. The South African Party's policy, on the other hand, was more liberal, and supported, with reservations, the granting of some measure of political freedom to the native, the encouragement of native education, and an extension of the Reserves, the quite inadequate areas which had been set aside for the native, and outside which, by a Land Act of 1913, he could buy no land. The landless natives, about  $2\frac{3}{4}$  million (more than half the total in the country), were forced to work for very small wages in order that

<sup>1</sup> *Our Own Times*: King-Hall.

their white rivals might receive a generous reward for their labour. "In the manufacturing industries the average wage for a native was £48 per annum, while the average wage for a white man was £248."<sup>1</sup> The whole white community in South Africa were "enabled to maintain a standard of life, approximating rather to that of America than to that of Europe, in a country that is poorer than most of the countries of Western Europe, solely because they had at their disposal those masses of docile, low-paid native labourers".<sup>2</sup>

The economic crisis hit South Africa severely. The fall in agricultural prices ruined the farmer. Flat white maize fetched 15s. per bag of 200 lbs. in 1929, but only 7s. 10d. in October, 1932.<sup>3</sup> In addition, between 1930 and 1933 the country suffered periods of drought worse than it had had for many years. The value of diamonds fell, and mines were closed since it became unprofitable to work them. South Africa went off the gold standard in the wake of Britain in 1932. As in Britain, a National Government was formed in 1933, Hertzog inviting Smuts and other opposition leaders into his Cabinet. This administration made extensive plans to relieve the unemployed and to raise the depression. Besides earmarking some millions for direct relief, the Government made proposals "for two huge irrigation schemes on the Vaal River, the advance of a large proportion of the cost of small schemes undertaken by private owners, and the financing of measures to check soil erosion".<sup>3</sup> The money for these plans came largely from the tax payments from the owners of gold mines, who, when the country went off the gold standard, could sell their commodity at high prices in the markets of the world. In 1933 the profits on gold were double those of the year before.

Summing up, the main feature of Dominions history in the years 1919-31 was the trend to independence, modified in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (less so in South Africa) by the knowledge that the life of the Dominions was so bound up with that of Britain that complete separation would be disastrous for both. On account of her economic dependence on the U.S.A., Canada felt if anything less closely associated with Britain than did Australia and New Zealand. One of Australia's best customers was Japan, but, while economic ties bound these two countries together, a fear of the expansionist policy of Japan haunted the minds of far-seeing Australian statesmen even in the peaceful 'twenties. In South Africa, ten years

<sup>1</sup> *The Post-War World*: Hampden Jackson.

<sup>2</sup> Economic Commission's Report, quoted in *The Post-War World*.

<sup>3</sup> *South Africa*: Agar-Hamilton.

after the conclusion of the Great War, the desire which had earlier been evident for separation from Britain had almost disappeared. The Dutch population were prepared to accept a place in the Commonwealth on conditions which allowed them, if they wished, to break their connection with Britain at any time. Once they had this apparent legal right, the desire to exercise it vanished. Only in Ireland and India, as we have seen, was the longing for independence so keen as to lead to an actual economic and, to a certain extent, military struggle with the motherland.

## CHAPTER XVII

### LEAGUE OF NATIONS

THE first section of each of the peace treaties which concluded the Great War consisted of the 26 Articles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, an integral part of the peace settlement. The main purpose of the League was to provide machinery for the peaceful discussion of international disputes, and to prevent if possible any such dispute from developing into war. The most significant of the Articles were Nos. 8, 12, 13, 15, and 16.

The first clause of Article 8 read: "The Members of the League recognize that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations." To the Council of the League was given the task of formulating plans for such reduction. The Council also was expected to advise how the evil effects attendant upon the manufacture by private enterprise of munitions of war might be prevented. By the same Article members of the League undertook to interchange full and frank information about the scale of their armaments, &c.

Articles 12, 13, and 15 dealt with the procedure to be followed by the League in the event of a dispute arising between two members. The members agreed to refer any such dispute to arbitration or judicial settlement, and bound themselves in no case to resort to war until three months after the award by the arbiters or the judicial decision. By Article 15 a dispute, instead of being referred to arbitration, might be submitted by one of the interested parties to the Council of the League. It was then the duty of the Council to investigate the dispute, and to publish a statement of the facts and the recommendations deemed just and proper in regard to them.

Article 16 was the important one which dealt with the "sanctions" to be put in force against any member of the League who resorted to war in disregard of the obligations under Articles 12, 13, or 15. In such an event the other members undertook to subject the offending state immediately "to the severance of all trade or

financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the Covenant-breaking state, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of the Covenant-breaking state and the nationals of any other state, whether a member of the League or not". In the second clause of this Article the Council of the League was authorized "to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval, or air force the members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League".

Another important Article of the Covenant (No. 19) gave to the League Assembly the right to recommend the revision of treaties "which have become inapplicable", or "whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world".

Besides its primary purpose of upholding peace, the League had other obligations. It became the guardian of the rights of minorities in those states upon which "minority treaties" had been imposed as part of the peace settlement of 1919-20. A minority which had a grievance against the Government of the state in which it lived could submit this grievance to the League, and a committee formed by the Council considered this complaint and suggested a remedy if such was needed. While minorities have frequently complained that their interests are by no means effectively safeguarded, "on the whole," wrote King-Hall, "the existence of the machinery of the League and the publicity which the grievances of minorities have received have improved 'minority conditions' as compared with the pre-war state of affairs".<sup>1</sup> A Mandates Commission was also formed by the League to receive annual reports from the individual mandatory powers of what had been done in the colonial or other territories placed, by the peace treaties, under their charge. The Saar territory was administered, after the Great War, by the League, as also was the Free City of Danzig.

The League controls various technical committees, the most important being those elected to deal with economic and financial questions in the international sphere. A Permanent Court of International Justice was established under the ægis of the League in 1921. An outgrowth of the League was an International Labour Organization, formed "to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women, and children, both in their own countries and in all countries to which their commercial and

<sup>1</sup> *Our Own Times*.

industrial relations extend". Other humanitarian activities fall within the province of the League: the abolition of slavery; the settlement of refugees; the suppression of the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs.<sup>1</sup>

The political bodies of the League are the Assembly and the Council. The Assembly, which meets once a year, is composed of representatives of all the member-states, each state sending not more than three delegates. The whole delegation casts but one vote in any matter. Routine business of the Assembly is handed over to various committees, such as those dealing with jurisdiction, technical organizations, disarmament, and so on. The Assembly may be said to correspond to a full international Parliament, while the Council, which meets three times a year, is like an international Cabinet. By Article 4 of the Covenant the Council was to consist of representatives of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers (namely, U.S.A., British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan), who had permanent seats, together with representatives of four other member-states, to be selected from time to time by the Assembly. Later the number of non-permanent seats in the Council was raised to nine. The administrative work is carried on by a permanent Secretariat, a kind of international civil service, stationed at Geneva, the home of the League.

The League was instituted at the same time as the Treaty of Versailles came into force, and the first meeting of the Council was held on 16th January, 1920. In the peace treaties 45 sovereign states (32 Allied and Associated Powers and 13 neutrals) were scheduled as "original members of the League", and when the Assembly met for the first time in November, 1920, 42 of these were represented. The chief absentee was the U.S.A. Neither Germany nor Russia was invited to join at this time, but other of the "enemy" states, Austria and Bulgaria, were elected with the necessary two-thirds majority at the first Assembly. Hungary became a member in 1922, Germany in 1926, and Turkey in 1932.<sup>1</sup>

The political influence of the League both pleased and disappointed its friends. It must be remembered that the League is not an "independent" body, but merely a union of individual sovereign states. Its success depends on the willingness of these states to sink their sovereignty for the good of all. In so far as Governments

<sup>1</sup> Russia joined the League in 1934. In 1933 both Japan and Germany withdrew from the League, and Italy followed suit in 1937. In 1938 the number of members was 58.

themselves are anxious to co-operate and to work internationally the League can make headway. If, however, sovereign independence proves stronger than the sense of international fellowship, then the League is bound to fail. It can hope for success only in a definitely anti-national atmosphere, and in the years following the Great War, when nationalism became a strong force in many countries, the difficulties of the League were at times acute. In all countries there were groups of influential men who either disliked the League or were convinced that it would not work. They urged their Governments to fall back on the pre-war system of power politics, to seek a balance of power in Europe, and so on, in preference to leaning upon what seemed to them the weak and unstable prop of international co-operation.

Between 1920 and 1923 the League was merely feeling its way, and the Allied Powers took little stock of it. Until 1921 the Supreme Council of the Allies was in existence and settled the main post-war problems which arose. It was succeeded by the Council of Ambassadors (again the Victor Powers) and the League was still neglected, though not entirely, because at times the Allies entrusted some task to it. In June, 1920, a dispute between Finland and Sweden about the Åland Islands (each claiming sovereignty over them) was referred to the League, and the League's decision accepted by both parties. The islands were handed over to Finland, but with guarantees to safeguard the rights of the Swedish population. Later on in the same year the League suffered a defeat in connection with the seizure of Vilna by the Poles. The League handled this matter, but failed to persuade the Poles to surrender what they had seized, and eventually in 1923 the Council of Ambassadors admitted Poland's legal right to the capture. In 1921 the rival claims of Germany and Poland to Upper Silesia were referred to the League, since the Allies, after holding a plebiscite in this area in March, were unable to agree among themselves to a solution of this problem. The partition of Upper Silesia which the League suggested (it had not an entirely free hand but was bound by conditions laid down by the Allied Council) was finally adopted. More to the League's credit was its reconstruction work in Austria in 1922.<sup>1</sup>

The year 1923 was a bad one for the League: in January the Lithuanians seized and held Memel, and immediately afterwards the French made their invasion of the Ruhr. In both matters the League was impotent, and towards the end of the year worse was

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 110-111.



to follow. The murder on Greek soil of the Italian members of a commission engaged in delimiting the Albanian-Greek frontier provoked an ultimatum from the Italian Government. This was followed by the bombardment of Corfu and the landing of Italian troops on the island.<sup>1</sup> The Council of the League was prepared to take action, but Mussolini threatened to occupy Corfu indefinitely if the League interfered. Eventually the Conference of Ambassadors drew up a peace settlement on lines suggested by the League Council, and this was accepted by both Italy and Greece. It was agreed to submit the dispute to the Permanent Court of International Justice, but, before this could be done, the Ambassadors suddenly changed their minds and ordered Greece to hand over the sum of 50 million lire to Italy. Friends of the League could not but reflect that Italy's flouting of its authority boded ill for the future.

For six or seven years after 1924 the League was much more powerful. It remained under the influence of the Allied Powers, although Germany joined it in 1926 and was given a permanent seat on the Council. In 1925 it prevented war between Greece and Bulgaria. In October of that year, after a border clash in which a Greek soldier and his commandant were killed, Greek troops crossed the Bulgarian frontier. Bulgaria appealed to the League, which promptly instructed both Governments to stop any military movements, and sent observers to the spot to discover what had actually happened. Both Bulgaria and Greece obeyed the League, whose supporters "rightly claim this episode as perhaps the most strikingly successful instance of the efficacy of its machinery for the preservation of peace".<sup>2</sup> Greece later accepted the verdict of a League Commission of Inquiry, which recommended that Bulgaria be recompensed by the payment of £45,000.

Another victory for the League was the settlement of an 'Iraq-Turkey dispute about the ownership of the Mosul vilayet. Although not a member of the League at the time, Turkey in August, 1924, consented to submit this matter to it, and sent a representative to the Council. The League provisionally delimited a frontier for the disputed area. While the matter was under discussion the Turks alienated League opinion by the ferocity with which they crushed in 1925 a rebellion of the Kurds, many of whom sought refuge in Mosul territory. The League decided that the provisional boundary would remain the permanent one, thus giving almost the whole of

<sup>1</sup> See p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-1934*: Gathorne-Hardy.

Mosul to 'Iraq. Turkey was loth at first to accept this decision, but eventually in June, 1926, agreed by a treaty to recognize the League frontier. /

Towards the end of the 'twenties the League's influence began to wane, chiefly because of its failure to bring about any measure of military disarmament. Article 8 of the Covenant, which bound the members of the League to reduce armaments "to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations", was reinforced by another clause of the Treaty of Versailles: "The Allied and Associated Powers . . . recognize that the acceptance by Germany of the terms laid down for her own disarmament will facilitate and hasten the accomplishment of a general reduction of armaments; and they intend to open negotiations immediately with a view to the eventual adoption of a scheme of general reduction. It goes without saying that the realization of this programme will depend in large part on the satisfactory carrying out by Germany of her own engagements." But despite the hope expressed in this Article no power was willing to render herself defenceless unless she was assured that she ran no risk by doing so. Soon it became obvious that disarmament was not a matter that could be treated alone, but that it was intimately bound up with the need for security and the principle of arbitration. Security, disarmament, and arbitration were like three props upon which the peace of Europe might rest; and all were necessary if the whole structure was to remain intact.

In Part V of the Treaty of Versailles Germany's disarmament was demanded by the Allies for this reason, "to render possible the initiation of a general limitation". German propagandists asserted that this meant that the Allies would disarm equally with Germany. But Gathorne-Hardy argued that there was no "contractual relationship between the disarmament of the vanquished and that contemplated by the victors".<sup>1</sup> Nowhere was there any indication that the Allies ever intended to disarm to the extent forced on Germany. Spender, on the other hand, was nearer the German point of view when he wrote: "A legal argument may be constructed to prove that they (the Allies) left themselves free, but there can be no doubt that on any natural reading of the Covenant the Germans and all other nations had the right to expect that they would disarm."<sup>2</sup>

The history of Europe in the years immediately following the

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-1934.*

<sup>2</sup> *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth.*

Great War is a story of lost opportunities, of failure to strike when the iron was hot. Time and again the appropriate moment for some definite step was missed; when the Allies later took this step, they found that circumstances had changed and that it was then too late. So it was with disarmament. Had the Victor Powers in 1919 made some concerted effort to reduce arms there was every chance of success. But the matter was shelved. The problem of security haunted France and other European nations; until they were assured that Germany's arms had been destroyed, they refused to think of or discuss the weakening of their own strength.

The question of disarmament was in the hands of the Council of the League, and in February, 1921, a committee, called the Temporary Mixed Commission, was appointed to report on the matter. While this committee was collecting the necessary data, an active move was made outside the League to prevent a post-war naval race from beginning among the chief powers. The United States invited Britain, France, Japan, and Italy to attend a conference on naval armaments at Washington. This was opened on 12th November, 1921, by C. E. Hughes, the American Secretary of State, with the outspoken words:

"We can no longer content ourselves with investigations, with statistics, with reports, with the circumlocution of inquiry. The essential facts are sufficiently known. The time has come, and this conference has been called, not for general resolutions or mutual advice, but for action.

"... the core of the difficulty is to be found in the competition in naval programmes. . . . One programme inevitably leads to another, and if competition continues, its regulation is impracticable. There is only one adequate way out, and that is to end it now."

He then made definite proposals, and these formed the subject of what proved to be difficult negotiation, since it was not easy to devise a formula to which all five powers would unconditionally subscribe. Britain, for example, pleaded, but without success, for the abolition of submarines, on the curious ground that they were "inhuman". She withheld the real reason, perfectly well known to the other delegates, that submarines in time of war might endanger her overseas supplies. France agreed to a limitation of battle-ship strength, but not of light cruisers or destroyers. Eventually a Five-Power Naval Treaty was concluded in February, 1922,<sup>1</sup> which left Britain, the U.S.A., and Japan with a capital ship strength in the ratio of 5:5:3. The corresponding figure for France and

<sup>1</sup> It remained in force till 1935.

Italy, who had no wish to rival the greater naval powers, was 1·75. By another clause in the treaty Britain and the U.S.A. pledged themselves not to strengthen their naval bases in certain areas of the Pacific, a provision which gave satisfaction to Japan. Care was taken by the British Admiralty that the area to which this restriction applied did not include the new Singapore base<sup>1</sup> that was in course of construction.

The Temporary Mixed Commission soon discovered that the problem of disarmament was inextricably entwined with that of security. In 1923 it produced a Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance,<sup>2</sup> based on texts prepared by Lord Robert Cecil and Colonel Requin, but this, although it was approved by 18 states, was turned down by Britain, the U.S.A., and the Soviet Union.

In 1924 the Temporary Mixed Commission was dissolved, and in the following year a Preparatory Commission for Disarmament was appointed to pave the way for a regular Disarmament Conference. The first meeting of the Preparatory Commission was held in May, 1926, at Geneva; this was followed by a second in September of the same year. What seemed almost insuperable difficulties faced the delegates from the start. France insisted that any measures of disarmament agreed to should be supervised and controlled by some international body. This proposal was rejected outright by Italy and the U.S.A., and was not one that Britain was willing to support. Again, France wished to consider armaments in the very widest sense of the term, and to include in the agenda such questions as the strategic advantages enjoyed by one country over another, the raw materials which gave one power a superiority over her neighbour, and so on. Britain and the U.S.A. realized that to widen the discussions so as to include the "war potential" of individual states would lead nowhere. On another question British and French experts were at variance. In calculating the military strength of a nation, the British claimed that trained reserves should be counted, whereas the French wished to restrict the count to men serving at any particular time with the colours.

In view of these, and other, divergences of opinion, two draft conventions, quite irreconcilable, were drawn up, one by Lord Robert Cecil, the other by a Frenchman, M. Paul-Boncour. These were set before the members of the Preparatory Commission at its third meeting in March, 1927. All that the Commission could do was to combine these texts in one statement, setting out side by side the alter-

<sup>1</sup> This naval base was formally opened in February, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 60-61.

native proposals of the French and British experts. There seemed little hope of any draft agreement being drawn up that would justify the calling together of a Disarmament Conference.

The matter of naval disarmament again came to the fore, and in June–August, 1927, an attempt was made to enlarge the scope of the Washington Naval Agreement by applying it to other categories of vessels in addition to capital ships. A conference was held at Geneva which Britain, the U.S.A., and Japan attended. France and Italy refused to take part, contending that the whole problem of security and disarmament was one that should be tackled as a whole and not in parts. The conference was a complete failure, mainly owing to the lack of preparation and previous discussion between the American and British delegates.<sup>1</sup> The breakdown occurred on a question of principle. America wished to apply to all categories the same ratio as had been agreed to at Washington for capital ships. Britain refused to accept this “ratio principle”, claiming that for certain types of vessels her needs bore no relation at all to those of other naval powers. For example, Britain, with a view to the proper control of the trade routes on which her existence depends, demanded as a minimum 70 of the smaller class of cruisers. The American proposal would have left Britain with a very much smaller number of these essential vessels. The conference broke down, in the words of Gathorne-Hardy, on “the fundamental cleavage between the advocates of ‘relativity’ and those of ‘absolute requirements’”.<sup>2</sup>

In 1927 the disarmament question became more acute after an official notification from the Conference of Ambassadors to the League Council that Germany’s disarmament was complete. Germany was now in a position to urge that a regular Disarmament Conference be speedily called, in order, as she insisted, that the Allies might fulfil their pledges. On 30th November of the same year the Preparatory Commission opened its fourth session, with a delegation from Soviet Russia present for the first time. M. Litvinov, the Russian representative, made a sweeping proposal for the immediate abolition of all armies, navies, and air forces, and the destruction of all war-ships, armaments, and munition factories. When this bombshell had burst, as it was no doubt intended to do, quite harmlessly, Litvinov brought forward more moderate proposals, which were postponed for later discussion. A fifth session of the Commission, held in 1928, brought matters no further on.

<sup>1</sup> See *Hansard*, Vol. 210, 5th Series, pp. 2102–2103.

<sup>2</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920–1934.*

In 1928, however, the supporters of peace had one victory to their credit, although it was a victory that could not bear close examination lest its hollowness should become apparent. This was the Briand-Kellogg Pact, which arose out of a suggestion made by Briand that France and the U.S.A. should bind themselves by treaty to renounce war as an instrument of policy in their relations with each other. Kellogg, Secretary of State for the U.S.A., proposed that the pact be extended to include other states, and his proposal was acted upon. On 27th August, 1928, 15 states signed the Briand-Kellogg Pact (or the Pact of Paris), thereby declaring "that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another". By 1931 the pact was signed by 60 states, including Germany, Italy, and Japan. While it was important as the expression of a vital change in outlook on the part of sovereign states (for up to this time the principle that war was a part of national policy had been freely accepted), yet the Pact of Paris outlawed only wars of aggression, and, as its virtue lay in the honesty and good-will of the Governments of the world, there were many sceptics even in 1928 who scoffed at its value as an instrument of peace. Quoted in *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34*, is a pertinent comment: "I think the most striking result of the Pact deserves mention, i.e. that signatories who wanted to violate it have merely adopted the simple device of going to war without a declaration, so that we have really relapsed into the primitive age before 'civilized' warfare existed!"

The accession to power of a Labour Government in Britain in 1929 gave a stimulus to disarmament. Ramsay MacDonald's Cabinet, despite the promptings of some of its ardent supporters, had no intention of plunging into reckless unilateral disarmament, but it seemed certainly more willing than the Conservatives to approach the question in a conciliatory spirit. Preparations were made for holding another Naval Disarmament Conference, and care was taken, by preparatory discussions, to prevent a breakdown such as had occurred in 1927. The conference, which opened in London on 21st January, 1930, was attended by Britain, the U.S.A., Japan, France, and Italy. On one question no agreement was reached—a demand put forward by Italy for parity in naval strength with France. This the French absolutely refused to concede. In other matters the five powers were in accord. They agreed to a naval holiday for five years in the building of capital ships, and to regu-

lations limiting the tonnage, &c., of submarines. Britain, the U.S.A., and Japan signed a Three-Power Naval Treaty settling their own problems. Naval parity was established between Britain and the U.S.A. in all categories of vessels not covered by the Washington Treaty of 1922. The difficulty which had caused a deadlock at the 1927 Conference—America's claim for a definite ratio in cruiser strength as opposed to Britain's absolute needs—was solved. Britain lowered her demand for light cruisers from 70 to 50, thereby paving the way for a compromise which satisfied both parties. To Japan was conceded a 60 per cent ratio with the U.S.A. in the larger type of cruisers (actually a 72 per cent ratio up to 1936), and a 70 per cent ratio in other cruisers and destroyers.

The success which had attended this second naval conference encouraged the hope that the Great Powers might yet agree to some measure of military disarmament. The Preparatory Commission renewed its deliberations, and at last, in December, 1930, adopted a Draft Disarmament Convention. The main proposals were shrouded with reservations and swamped in objections. Nevertheless it was submitted to the Council of the League as the best that the Commission, after five years of patient work, could produce, and the Council arranged for the calling of a Disarmament Conference in February, 1932.

# INTERLUDE

## WORLD SLUMP

IN the spring and summer of 1929 the world was in an optimistic mood. The general feeling was that the worst of the post-war difficulties had been surmounted, and that a period of comparative economic security, if not actual prosperity, was at hand. In the U.S.A. no one had any doubt but that the election of Herbert Hoover as President in 1928 heralded four more years of prosperity. In 1928 Hoover said: "We in America to-day are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of the land. The poor-house is vanishing from among us. We have not yet reached the goal, but, given a chance to go forward with the policies of the last eight years, we shall soon, with the help of God, be in sight of the day when poverty will be banished from this nation." Two years later the number of unemployed in the U.S.A. touched 6 million, and in 1932 it rose to 12 million.

Even in Europe there were hopes in 1929 that the worst of the post-war depression and unsettlement was over. Politically there was peace among the nations, and no European country seemed a potential danger spot at the moment. Germany, now a member of the League, was apparently reconciled to the Versailles Treaty, and willing to co-operate with France and the other Victor Powers as she feverishly rebuilt her trade and industry. The succession states were settling down more or less happily, Turkey, under the direction of Mustapha Kemal, was reconstructing her internal economy on Western European lines, and Italy was also engrossed in internal affairs. Even Russia had become a respectable neighbour; Stalin had crushed the opposition of Trotsky, and the activities of the Comintern in foreign countries were considerably curtailed in order not to embarrass the Soviet Government in its gigantic task of making the first Five-Year Plan a success. In Britain in the spring of 1929 a Conservative administration could look back with some



measure of complacency on five years' solid if unimaginative work. The most serious problem that faced Britain was that of the large body of unemployed, and it was with the rather vain hope of finding a solution for this problem that the electorate in May cast their votes for Labour candidates in sufficient numbers to return them as the largest party to the House. But the Labour Government which took office in June, 1929, was not at all revolutionary, and was not likely to hinder the gradual return to "normalcy" that was taking place. A measure of financial stability had been secured throughout the world by 1929. By then 25 of the 33 most important states had linked their currencies either directly or indirectly to gold, and, with this gold *bloc* in existence, it looked as though international trade could now flow more easily.

In 1928 the American public's belief was unshaken that the prosperity they had enjoyed since 1923 with Coolidge as President would continue under Hoover. A fever of speculation raged in the country. The prices of stocks soared to hitherto undreamt-of heights, and both rich and poor risked their savings in even the most speculative undertakings, eager to share in the profitable and apparently illimitable expansion of American industry. Men with money to invest no longer looked to foreign countries for a rich return on their capital; the home market was flourishing, and in domestic investment seemed a way to a quick fortune. Enormous gains, it was said, might be made within a few weeks by the buying and selling of securities and real estate.

Even one or two precipitate falls in the value of stocks in the winter of 1928-29 (followed, however, by speedy recovery) did not shake the confidence of the American investor. Financial experts, realizing the grossly fictitious value of securities and real estate during the boom, issued warnings about a probable sudden and permanent drop in stock prices, but no one anticipated the extent of the disaster which occurred in October, 1929. On 24th October an unprecedented bout of selling on the New York Stock Exchange took place, with an amazing fall in the value of stocks. The boom had burst. Five days later, on 29th October, the fall became a complete collapse, prices sinking lower and lower as the day's volume of trade mounted eventually to the gigantic figure of nearly 16½ million shares. At the end of the day "the average price of fifty leading stocks had fallen nearly forty points".<sup>1</sup> Although the worst of the panic was over within a day or two, prices continued to fall until the

<sup>1</sup> *Only Yesterday*: Allen.

middle of November. By then "billions of dollars' worth of profits—and paper profits—had disappeared. The grocer, the window-cleaner and the seamstress had lost their capital. In every town there were families which had suddenly dropped from showy affluence into debt. Investors who had dreamed of retiring to live on their fortunes now found themselves back once more at the very beginning of the long road to riches. Day by day the newspapers printed the grim reports of suicides".<sup>1</sup>

Following upon the Wall Street crash, a rapid fall in the price of almost all raw materials occurred, and an equally rapid shrinkage in the volume of world trade. In the years 1928–32 world wholesale prices fell, on the average, by about one-third in terms of gold currencies.<sup>2</sup> In the same period the value of world trade fell all over by some 60 per cent.<sup>3</sup> The fall in prices increased the burden of international debts. Countries, depending on the revenue from their exports to meet their foreign commitments, had to sell abroad a half more than before to get the same return. But this was difficult to do, because international trade was severely curtailed. Individual Governments raised their tariff barriers as high as possible and imposed restrictive quotas to keep out foreign goods. Thereby they hoped to lessen the effects of the slump, and to protect their own industries from foreign competition.

While the bursting of the prosperity bubble in the U.S.A. precipitated an economic and financial crisis in European countries, actually the apparent stability which Europe enjoyed in 1928 rested on very weak foundations. For years the economic life of Germany and other states had been sustained by a flow of credit from the U.S.A. European countries had been able to pay their debts to America and to each other, and Germany had punctiliously

<sup>1</sup> *Only Yesterday*: Allen.

<sup>2</sup> For details see Table 124 in *Statistical Year Book of the League of Nations, 1932–33*.

<sup>3</sup> The following figures show the severity of the slump:

VALUE OF IMPORTS AND EXPORTS (IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS)

	1929	1932
United Kingdom ..	8956	3561
U.S.A. .. ..	9496	2907
Germany .. ..	6415	2471
France .. ..	4247	1946
Japan .. ..	1969	783
Italy .. ..	1941	771

(Table 98, *Ibid.*)

transferred to the Allies the reparation payments she owed under the Dawes Plan, but all this, it was now realized, had been made possible, not by domestic recovery in Europe but by the loans which had been sent across the Atlantic from the U.S.A. When these loans stopped, as they did in 1929, the true financial bankruptcy of Europe was plain to see. "It now became clear," wrote G. D. H. Cole and M. Cole, "that Germany had only paid reparations at all to the extent that she had borrowed from America the wherewithal to pay, and that in effect the payments made by Europe as a whole to America had been nothing more than a handing back of a part of the sum simultaneously lent by the American investors to a variety of European borrowers, both public and private. It became apparent that America could only receive payment of the sums which she claimed from Europe as long as she was prepared to go on lending to Europe the money with which to pay, and thereby to swell year by year the total of the claims which would have to be met in future."<sup>1</sup>

Many explanations of the world slump were suggested, apart from the artificial boom in the U.S.A. and the economic dependence of Europe on America. Post-war restrictions which hindered the free flow of international trade were blamed. After the Great War Britain tried to restore in Europe the pre-war system of free, or comparatively free, trade, upon which her own prosperity had been originally built. She failed. Instead, individual states raised tariff walls to keep out the products of their neighbours. Theoretically, it was generally admitted that this policy of Protection, of closing national markets to the foreigner, was one that in the long run harmed the peoples of the world as a whole; in practice, however, no country, except Britain, seemed anxious to surrender the immediate apparent advantages of tariffs. This became clear after a World Economic Conference which was held in 1927, and at which 50 nations were represented. One recommendation of the conference was that the "time has come to put an end to the increase in tariffs and to move in the opposite direction". It was agreed that if tariffs could not be removed they ought at least to be lowered, and that Governments should help in the free flow of trade by withdrawing subsidies from industries and "reducing dumping to a minimum". Despite these recommendations nations stuck to their tariffs, and indeed continued to increase them.

<sup>1</sup> *The Intelligent Man's Review of Europe To-day.*

More particular reasons suggested for the slump were:

- (1) The over-production after the Great War of raw materials (rubber, &c.), and a serious fall in the price of these products once the world's markets were saturated.
- (2) The general rationalization and mechanization of industry in the post-war years, with a consequent rise in the number of unemployed people. The purchasing power of this body of workless being small, manufacturers found difficulty in ridding themselves of their large stocks of goods, and were forced to lower prices.
- (3) The maldistribution of gold. In the post-war years France and the U.S.A. managed to get hold of a very large stock of the world's gold. In other countries, where the supply of gold was small, the currency was deflated and the price level of goods fell. Moreover, in France and in the U.S.A., the gold, instead of being used to increase the note issue and thereby raise commodity prices, was immobilized in the vaults of central banks.

The effects of the world slump were felt in Europe in 1930-31, first of all in Austria and Germany,<sup>1</sup> and shortly afterwards in other parts of the Continent. Britain did not escape, but she saved herself from financial disaster by drastic economies and by suspending the gold standard, an action which had far-reaching results.<sup>2</sup> Foreign debtors whose money was still in the hands of the Bank of England or of British banking houses lost about 20 per cent of the value of their holdings by the depreciation of the pound. The Banks of France, Greece, and the Netherlands suffered in this way. By the end of 1931 other countries, particularly those whose trading interests were linked with Britain's, had also gone off the gold standard. Among these were the Scandinavian countries, Austria, Portugal, Rumania, Greece, and Japan. One effect of Britain's new currency policy was to lower the price of her products to foreign buyers. British exports had therefore an advantage over their rivals in foreign markets, but this was offset by the passing in some countries of measures against the dumping of cheap British goods.

The economic crisis at the beginning of the 'thirties brought the matter of reparations and war-debts again to the fore, for it was insisted by many that these were at the root of the trouble. To

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 71-73.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 167-169.

consider this matter the British Government suggested an International Conference, and this was held at Lausanne in June-July, 1932, with Ramsay MacDonald, Britain's Prime Minister, in the chair. This conference put an end to the payment of annuities by Germany over a large number of years. Instead, Germany agreed, by way of reparation, to make one final payment to the Bank for International Settlements of three milliard gold Reichsmarks (150 million pounds) in the form of 5 per cent bonds. The bank had the right to negotiate these bonds, but not until three years after the signing of the agreement. The Allies thankfully wrote *finis* to the mass of data, plans, warnings, and evasions, in which the story of the vain pursuit of reparations was enshrined.

The Allies cancelled war-debts among themselves, and made the ratification of the Lausanne agreement dependent on a satisfactory settlement of their American war-debts. The U.S.A., however, still refused to admit that war-debts and reparations were in any way linked together. Informed statesmen in America were quite well aware that the cancellation of war-debts would be to the advantage of their country, but it was difficult to convince the electorate of the truth of this. In November, 1932, both Britain and France addressed notes to the U.S.A. Government asking for the postponement of the payments due in December. This was refused. Britain therefore paid the instalment due (£33 million pounds), as also did five other countries, including Italy. Five countries, on the other hand, among them France and Belgium, defaulted. In June, 1933, when the next instalment fell due, Britain sent a token payment of 10 million dollars in silver, hoping thereby to escape the charge of defaulting. The U.S.A. Treasury, however, denied that a token payment prevented official default, and in the circumstances Britain decided to default in earnest. In December, 1933, no payment was made, and the problem of war-debts remained unsolved.

At Lausanne it had been recommended that a World Economic Conference should be called, and this was done. Preparatory to it, Ramsay MacDonald visited President Roosevelt (elected President of the U.S.A. in November, 1932), and in a joint note which was issued occurred the statement that "the ultimate need of re-establishing an international monetary standard" was vital. This point was driven home more strongly in a message delivered by the President on 16th May, 1933, when he emphasized that the "stabilization of currencies, the freeing of the flow of world trade, and international action to raise price levels" were the subjects with which the con-

ference had to deal. On 12th June, 1933, the conference opened, with high hopes that international action would speedily put an end to the financial and economic chaos of the world. These hopes were doomed to disappointment, and the man who ruined the conference was Roosevelt himself.

When the President was sworn into office in March, 1933, the U.S.A. banking system was in a state of complete collapse. Thousands of banks had been forced to close their doors, with the consequent ruin of tens of thousands of investors. The unemployment figure was in the neighbourhood of 15 million. On 19th April America suspended the gold standard. As in Britain, the immediate effect was in many ways favourable, and Roosevelt changed his mind completely about currency stabilization. He considered that the Government's ability to manipulate the dollar might be a valuable weapon in the fight for recovery. What he had expressed on 16th May he no longer believed in on 12th June, and a measure which Britain and other countries thought essential to economic recovery he now condemned.

The World Economic Conference was aware of the President's changed opinion, but on 30th June it devised a formula, expressing the need for currency stability, which satisfied both the gold *bloc* countries and others with non-gold monetary systems. Even the American delegation at the conference gave it their approval. Then came a message from Roosevelt repudiating the formula and pouring scorn on the "specious fallacy of achieving a temporary and probably artificial stability in foreign exchange" and "the old fetishes of so-called international bankers". The conference continued to sit until 27th July, but actually, after the President's *volte-face*, it could do little that was effective. "The now habitual oscillation of the United States between interference and isolation," wrote Gathorne-Hardy, "had once more played a decisively destructive part."<sup>1</sup> The havoc wrought by the world slump had to be repaired not by the united effort of all but by individual Governments working on strictly national lines.

Roosevelt himself was granted very wide emergency powers, and launched a "New Deal" to revive the economic life of the U.S.A. He became virtually a dictator for the time being, but one bound, as it proved, in constitutional chains, and at the mercy of suspicious opponents who, when they considered that certain of the President's plans injured their own interests, did not hesitate to use

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34.*

all legal means to prevent their being carried out. Industry in the U.S.A. was put under the control of the National Recovery Administration (N.R.A.), which had, among the wide powers delegated to it, the right to raise commodity prices, to eliminate unfair competition, and to arrange "codes" for the establishment of minimum wages, maximum working hours, &c. To the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (A.A.A.) was given the power of restricting agricultural production by voluntary agreements with producers, of helping bankrupt farmers by arranging for the reduction of mortgage rates, &c. A host of subsidiary Acts were passed dealing with every aspect of the U.S.A.'s economic and financial life. Roosevelt's "New Deal" was watched with very great interest by other countries, each striving in its own way to free itself from the slough of depression. The President's measures provoked considerable opposition from sections of the American people, but "that he succeeded in averting a worse calamity," wrote Spender, "can hardly be questioned by those who realize the state of economic anarchy and the dangers of civil tumult which confronted him when he succeeded to office in November, 1932".<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Europe was slowly recovering from the economic slump, and in 1934 almost every country was better off than in 1931. The manufacture of armaments helped to drive on the industrial machine, for in the 'thirties rearmament on a large scale became part of almost every nation's policy. Naturally the purpose of these armaments was, in every case without exception, to preserve peace. Politically the slump caused a general movement to the Right. Both in Britain and France a "national" Government was formed, which meant virtually the destruction of an effective Parliamentary opposition. In other countries, including Germany, Austria, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Rumania, a dictatorship, either of an open or a veiled kind, was instituted. While many of her neighbours were discarding the trappings of democracy, Czechoslovakia kept her constitution unaltered, but even there no encouragement was given to the free expression of opposition views. The Soviet was engaged in its first Five-Year Plan when the slump came, and managed to continue on the lines laid down, although the fall in commodity prices and restrictions on world trade put difficulties in the Government's way that had not been anticipated.

In a general way the need for "planning" became apparent in all countries. Large schemes of public works were undertaken in

<sup>1</sup> *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth.*

order to relieve unemployment. New monetary policies (e.g. that advocated by Major Douglas) were suggested as a means of making the financial machine in Capitalist countries reliable and smooth of working. In some parts of the world Governments restricted production—during the slump the corn harvest had been burned in Canada and the coffee crop in Brazil; in others, agriculture and industry were helped by subsidies. The age of *laissez-faire* and of Free Trade seemed definitely at an end. Even Britain, the last defender of the 19th century economic system, was forced to join with the rest of the world in planning, restrictions, subsidies, and tariff walls.





## PART TWO

1932–1939



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE FAR EAST

**I**N a speech delivered at the Imperial Conference of June, 1921, General Smuts stated: "The problems of the Pacific are to my mind the world problems of the next fifty years or more." Ten years later it seemed as though his prophecy was to come true, for it was then that Japan launched an attack against China, and defied the world in order to satisfy her imperialistic spirit. Modern Japan began in 1871 when, with the abolition of feudalism and serfdom, the state was organized on European lines. She became a great industrial nation and, again following the example of Europe, conquered new trade markets with the sword. Japan built up a well trained army and an efficient navy on Western lines, and step by step climbed to the status of a Great Power, a rival to those in Europe. Tabulated, her achievements were:

- 1895: The defeat of China in war. Russia, France, and Germany combined to withhold from Japan the fruits of her victory.
- 1905: The defeat of Russia in war. Russia surrendered the southern half of the island of Sakhalin and her rights in the Liao-Tung Peninsula in Manchuria.
- 1910: The annexation of Korea.
- 1915: The forced acceptance by China of Twenty-one Demands. In their original form these demands would have given Japan virtual control over her neighbour. They had to be modified somewhat in view of protests from the U.S.A.
- 1919: The acquisition of Germany's pre-war rights in Kiao Chau and the province of Shantung. China protested, but in vain, against this infringement of her sovereignty.

When the Great War was over, Japan still kept forces in various parts of the Shantung Province. China remained dissatisfied, while

the U.S.A., Britain, and other countries with interests in China were hostile to Japan's pretensions to be Lord of the East. Eventually a conference was held at Washington in 1921-22 to settle this Eastern Question. (This conference also discussed the limitation of naval armaments.<sup>1</sup>) Japan agreed to restore Kiao Chau to China and to withdraw her forces from Shantung. Britain, the U.S.A., France, and Japan signed a Four-Power Treaty which pledged the signatories to co-operate and consult with each other in matters affecting their possessions in the Pacific. A Nine-Power Treaty (the additional powers were Italy, Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands, and China herself) was also concluded. By it the powers recognized the sovereign independence of China, and agreed to the principle of equal opportunity for trade in China for all nations. It seemed in 1922 as though Japan was prepared to behave herself. Actually she was merely postponing to a more opportune moment an attack on China's independence.

After the Revolution in China in 1911 and the setting up of a republic, the bonds which had loosely held together the various provinces of this unwieldy civilization snapped, and disintegration and anarchy became almost endemic. In 1922 civil war broke out in North and Central China, and the rivalry of Tuchuns (provincial governors), with continually changing alliances and turns of fortune, prevented any unification taking place in these areas. Meanwhile in Canton, where the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) had its headquarters, Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the movement to infuse a nationalist spirit among the Chinese, was actively working for that end with the aid of Russian advisers, in particular Michael Borodin. The Soviet was willing to help the Nationalists to unite the masses, while at the same time she spread her Communist doctrine in this virgin soil and encouraged anti-foreign agitation. Incidents occurred which inflamed the Chinese against foreigners. In June, 1925, for example, a contingent of Chinese demonstrators, which was marching past the British and French concessions at Canton, fired a volley. This was immediately returned by the European troops, and 37 Chinese were killed and many wounded. Anti-foreign feeling became more intense than ever, and a widespread boycott of foreign, particularly British, goods was instituted.

This Canton incident, in Gathorne-Hardy's opinion, formed "a landmark in the history of Chinese international relations".<sup>2</sup> It convinced Britain and other foreign powers that their relations

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 182-183.

<sup>2</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34.*

with the Kuomintang would require to be speedily regularized. The Nationalist Party was not only consolidating its position south of the Yangtse but was also making progress in Northern China. On 1st January, 1927, the National Government changed its capital from Canton to Hankow, a more convenient site because of its central position. Britain was prepared to recognize the authority of the Kuomintang, and in a communication addressed to the Washington Treaty Powers expressed her sympathy with the nationalist movement and her willingness to arrange treaty-revision to satisfy the spirit of this new China. This declaration of policy was given practical form in February, 1927, in an agreement by which Britain surrendered her concession in Hankow to a Chinese administration.

Sun Yat-sen died in 1925, and after his death there became apparent in the Kuomintang an internal conflict between the Left wing, which wished to co-operate fully with the Soviet, and the Right wing, which was eager to rid itself of Communist taint and to come to terms with the Western Powers. For a time there were two rival Kuomintang Governments, one, anti-Communist, functioning at Nanking, the other, still in favour of the Soviet alliance, at Hankow. In 1927, however, the Hankow Government reversed its policy, dismissed Borodin and other Soviet advisers, and the split in the party was healed, Nanking remaining now the seat of Government.

By this time the Nationalist forces were operating with success in Northern China against hostile armies. But the greater the influence which the Kuomintang gained in the north, the more suspicious became the attitude of Japan, who felt that regions in which her authority ought to be supreme were being invaded by this dangerous nationalist spirit. The antagonism of Japan turned the hatred of the Chinese against her, and it was now Japan's turn to endure a boycott of her goods. By July, 1928, China proper was unified, but only nominally, under one central Government, and by the end of the year the union of Manchuria with China under the Kuomintang had also taken place, despite the unconcealed disapproval of the Japanese authorities. But even the semblance of unity soon began to disappear, and by 1931 it looked as though China would, as before, fall into a state of complete anarchy. Internally there seemed no influence strong enough to put a stop to this process of disintegration. It was stopped, however, by a Japanese attack launched against Manchuria in September, 1931.

By the treaty which concluded the Russo-Japanese War of

1904-5 Russia handed over to Japan the control of the South Manchurian Railway from Port Arthur to Changchun, the Chinese Government, moreover, agreeing to grant her a thirty-five years' lease of this railway, and to allow her to keep a force of 15,000 men in the railway zone to protect it. Japan considered Manchuria of great value to her. It was a market for her goods and the source of some valuable raw materials. Moreover, its position as a buffer state between Russia and China proper gave it strategic importance; so long as Japan had control in Manchuria, an alliance between the Soviet and China was less dangerous to her. In 1915 Japan increased her influence in this territory as a result of the Twenty-one Demands she forced upon her neighbour. Her lease of the Liao-Tung Peninsula and of the railway zone was extended to ninety-nine years, and concessions were granted to Japanese to lease land and to carry on business in Manchuria without interference. But the Chinese did not acquiesce without a struggle in this peaceful penetration of Manchuria. Attacks on Japanese soldiers and other incidents of a like nature were frequent.

On 18th September, 1931, an alleged attempt by a band of Chinese to blow up a part of the railway line in the neighbourhood of Mukden led to action by the Japanese troops on the spot. There can be little doubt that this incident was arranged by the Japanese themselves as a pretext for starting hostilities. The day after the explosion (the damage to the track was so slight as not to interfere with the normal traffic) Japanese troops occupied Mukden, the Chinese garrison of 10,000 making virtually no resistance. Within three days they were in control of other important towns, well out with the railway zone. The Government at Tokio was not altogether happy about this rapid military occupation, but the soldiers on the spot paid little heed to the authorities at home. By the beginning of January, 1932, the independent Chinese Government in Manchuria had disappeared, and Japan's hold on the country was complete. She set up puppet provincial rulers under her own authority, and eventually transformed Manchuria into an independent republic, with the name of Manchukuo. In March, 1934, Pu Yi, who had been Chief Executive of the new state, was crowned as the hereditary Emperor Kang Teh. Pu Yi was the last Emperor of China, abdicating in 1912 when the Chinese Republic was formed.

Both China and Japan were members of the League of Nations, and in September, 1931, China addressed an appeal to the League. The League Council appointed a commission, with Lord Lytton as

president, to investigate the situation in Manchuria and submit a report. The Commission left Europe for China in February, 1932. Before it sailed Sino-Japanese tension had led to an outbreak of hostilities in Shanghai, the Chinese quarter of which, Chapei, was bombed into ruins by Japanese airmen. The Chinese put up a valiant resistance, and fighting continued until the beginning of March. In May a definite agreement was signed and the Japanese forces evacuated the city.

The Lytton Report was published in October, 1932. While it expressed sympathy with Japan's desire for a stable government in China, the Report condemned the aggressor for his forcible seizure of Chinese territory, and for the setting up of a new régime in Manchuria against the wishes of the inhabitants. The Japanese claim that an independent Manchukuo was created as the result of "a genuine and spontaneous independence movement" was denied. The Report recommended that the Japanese forces should evacuate the territories they had illegally occupied and confine themselves to the railway zone; that negotiations to settle outstanding differences should be carried out under League auspices by Japan and China; and that any settlement should concede to Manchuria a large measure of autonomy under, however, Chinese sovereignty. In February, 1933, the League Assembly adopted this Report. Japan refused to accept this decision, and gave notice of her withdrawal from the League.

So far from being willing to surrender what she had gained, Japan was by this time engaged in further operations in China. Towards the end of February, 1933, her forces entered Jehol, which lay between Manchuria and the Great Wall, and a month later had occupied this province entirely, the Chinese, despite their superiority in numbers, failing to make much serious resistance to the enemy's advance. In April, the Japanese troops crossed the Great Wall, and the Nanking Government was forced to make peace. Japan claimed that Jehol was an integral part of Manchuria, and incorporated it into the new state of Manchukuo.

Naturally Japan's aggression caused considerable misgiving in those states which had trading concessions in Chinese territory. It seemed as though Japan was determined to claim China as a special sphere for her own influence, and eventually to exclude other nations from the Chinese trade. In a statement issued by her Foreign Office in April, 1934, Japan threatened in veiled phrases any country which gave help to China. She claimed that it was



only "natural" that the responsibility for keeping peace and order in Eastern Asia should fall on her.

"We oppose, therefore," continued the statement, "any attempt on the part of China to avail herself of the influence of any other country in order to resist Japan; we also oppose any action taken by China calculated to play one Power against another. Any joint operations undertaken by foreign Powers even in the name of technical or financial assistance at this particular moment after the Manchurian and Shanghai incidents are bound to acquire political significance. . . ." While negotiations on normal questions of finance or trade would not be objected to, "supplying China with war aeroplanes, building aerodromes in China, and detailing military instructors or military advisers to China or contracting a loan to provide funds for political uses would obviously tend to alienate friendly relations between Japan, China, and other countries and to disturb peace and order in Eastern Asia. Japan will oppose such projects."

The U.S.A., Britain, and France, the countries to which this warning was primarily addressed, repudiated Japan's claims, and insisted that their rights were protected by the Nine-Power Treaty and other international agreements relating to the East.

Japan was not content with her conquest of Manchuria, disappointed apparently by the comparatively meagre gains which she reaped from her control of this state. She feared, moreover, the growing spirit of nationalism in China, for if China became a united nation, it was Japan that would live in the shadow of her gigantic neighbour. Japanese forces crossed the Great Wall and penetrated well into Northern China. In July, 1937, a clash occurred between the enemies, and within a year or so a major war ("undeclared") was in progress, with fighting taking place in various parts of Chinese territory. The interests in China of Britain, the U.S.A., and other countries were seriously injured.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE FAILURE OF THE LEAGUE

IN a book first published in 1931 M. H. Cornéjo, one of the original members of the League Council, wrote: "Day by day the authority of the League is more objective, seeking in equity solutions contrary to the egoism of States and becoming an instrument for the co-ordination of interests. Every time that the threat of an appeal to force may be perceived behind an attitude, the best cause will be irremediably lost. The Power playing at imperialism will be pitilessly isolated. That is the inevitable alliance of peace."<sup>1</sup> This boastful and optimistic prophecy became sadly ironical a few months later. Japan moved against China in Manchuria, and no attempt was made to stop her. This failure was a blow from which the League never recovered.

The League Assembly condemned Japan's aggression against a fellow member, and, under the Covenant, the sanctions set down in Article 16 ought to have been put in force against her. This was not done. Britain was the chief power whose interest it was to maintain the *status quo* in the East, but she gave no sign of wishing to collaborate with other powers to restrain Japan. On the contrary, Sir John Simon, Britain's Foreign Minister, made it plain that his Government opposed collective action of any kind. In January, 1932, the U.S.A. invited Britain to associate itself with America in refusing to recognize the conquest of Manchuria by Japan. This invitation was rejected, the British Foreign Office explaining that "as the British Government had received assurances from the Japanese delegate during the November-December Council meeting that Japan would respect the Open Door in Manchuria, it saw no reason for associating itself with the American attitude".<sup>2</sup> (Actually this promise was not strictly kept.) Admittedly the technical difficulties of imposing sanctions on a country like Japan would have been very great, but there is no doubt that, with the collaboration of the U.S.A., the League could have forced Japan to accept the generous

<sup>1</sup> *The Balance of the Continents*.

(F 774)

<sup>2</sup> *Inquest on Peace: "Vigilantes"*.

settlement recommended by the Lytton Report, and probably stopped the outbreak of the later war.

J. L. Garvin used the phrase, "half-headedness and half-heartedness" to describe the National Government's foreign policy. On the one hand, the Government gave lip service to the Covenant and to the obligations by which Britain, with other members of the League, was bound. On the other hand, there was considerable sympathy among members of the Conservative Party for Japan, and a feeling that, as long as Britain's trade interests in China were not interfered with, the imposition by the Japanese military authorities of some sort of stable government in China (it was presumed that that was easily possible) was all to the good. Speeches delivered in the House of Commons by prominent Conservatives in February, 1933, reflected this feeling. L. S. Amery, for example, said:

"I confess that I see no reason whatever why, either in act, or in word, or in sympathy, we should go individually, or internationally, against Japan in this matter. Japan has got a very powerful case based upon fundamental realities. . . . When you look at the fact that Japan needs markets and that it is imperative for her, in the world in which she lives, that there should be some sort of peace and order, then who is there among us to cast the first stone and to say that Japan ought not to have acted with the object of creating peace and order in Manchuria and defending herself against the continual aggression of vigorous Chinese nationalism? Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt, stand condemned if we condemn Japan.<sup>1</sup>

The last sentence illustrated the cleavage in opinion that existed after the Great War. Did the Treaty of Versailles usher in a new era of co-operation among nations, of the settlement of disputes by discussion? Or was this merely the idle fancy of a band of idealists, and did the fundamentals of international action remain as before? L. S. Amery ignored completely the change in Britain's relations with India and Egypt in the post-war years, and the obligations under the Covenant which both Britain and Japan had shouldered. His speech echoed the sentiments of that section of the Conservative Party which still believed that the individual might of a nation, and the strength of the allies it could rely upon, decided on what side lay right, and on what side wrong.

The case for action against Japan was complete in every way. First, she had broken her obligation under Article 10 of the Covenant: "The members of the League undertake to respect and preserve

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 275, 5th Series, p. 82.

as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all members of the League." Second, the Nine-Power Treaty bound the signatories "to respect the sovereignty, the independence, and the territorial and administrative integrity of China," and "to provide the fullest and most unembarrassed opportunity to China to develop and maintain for herself an effective and stable government". Finally, the High Contracting Parties of the Briand-Kellogg Pact agreed "that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts, of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means".

The failure of the League had far-reaching consequences. Both Italy and Germany concluded that there was little risk in breaking treaties and carrying out aggression, since the League Powers seemed loth to act in consort. Japan called the "bluff" of the League, and proved to the world that even a slight danger of war was enough to cool the ardour of its supporters. In an analysis of Britain's foreign policy, prepared by a "Small Group of Experts" and published in 1937, the National Government was condemned because it "struck a fatal blow at the collective system, killed any chance of disarmament, and started the present drift toward a world war which, when it comes, will be infinitely more devastating to the present social and Imperial order than anything that could have resulted from applying the Covenant to Japan".<sup>1</sup>

With a more sympathetic outlook Gathorne-Hardy wrote:

"The shock, therefore, which the incident administered to the whole system of collective security was tremendous and well-nigh fatal, and the only question on which opinion can be divided is as to whether the responsibility for this lies wholly at the door of Japan, or whether it must be shared by those who planned a system which the world is incapable of working. There are, indeed, persons who think that the application of sanctions was practicable, but the difficulties were so great, and the prospect of plunging the world in war so formidable, that the inaction of members of the League must be considered pardonable, if not wholly justified."<sup>2</sup>

Linked closely with the failure of the League to stop Japan's aggression in China was the failure also of the long-awaited Disarmament Conference. It opened on 2nd February, 1932, under the presidency of Arthur Henderson, with 64 nations represented. The moment was inauspicious; Japan was engaged in her attack on

<sup>1</sup> *The Road to War.*    <sup>2</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-34.*

Shanghai. Virtually the conference was doomed to failure if in the Far East Japan was allowed to carry out what hostilities she wished and to muster as large armaments as her financial resources permitted. Litvinov, the Russian delegate, insisted that world peace was indivisible. The Western states, however, were hopeful of agreeing among themselves to some measure of disarmament. It was a vain hope. Russia made it plain that she would sign an agreement only if Japan was a party to it; she would not allow her forces to be inferior to those of her aggressive rival in the East. Germany, who considered the Soviet as the enemy against whom her strength would ultimately be thrown, rejected any proposal to put her in an inferior position in relation to the Red Army. So it was obvious that while Japan was allowed to do as she liked there was little chance of any general agreement. Nevertheless the attempt was made.

The Draft Convention, the work of the Preparatory Commission for Disarmament, which was first submitted to the conference, was a very incomplete document—more in the nature of suggestions upon which the delegates could build. It had been approved, moreover, only with innumerable reservations by the chief powers. In the early stages of the conference a conflict between Germany's claim for equality of armaments with other powers and France's demand for security against a rearmed Germany came to the fore. But this fundamental difficulty was shelved while various proposals were discussed. The Soviet Union suggested total disarmament, and, since this was unacceptable, a reduction of 50 per cent all round. France urged that an international force should be created to be used against an aggressor. Britain's contribution to the discussion was a Resolution on Qualitative Disarmament (i.e. the abolition of offensive weapons), moved in April, 1932, by Sir John Simon. It was adopted in principle, but this did not help much, since each power had its individual and peculiar idea of what constituted defensive weapons. France insisted that tanks (called *chars d'assaut*) were defensive; Admiral Pound claimed that Britain's battle-ships could not be regarded as aggressive weapons. The Americans proposed to cut down by a third all land, sea, and air forces, keeping thereby the ratio already existing between the nations. Various other proposals—the Budgetary limitation of armaments, the nationalization and control of arms manufacture, &c.—were discussed but, when the conference adjourned in July, 1932, no definite progress had actually been made. In September the German

Government gave notice of its withdrawal from the conference, since Germany's right to equality of armaments had not been admitted.

Two days after this German announcement the conference met for its second session, and the chief desire of the delegates was to woo Germany back again. Eventually a formula to satisfy both Germany and France was devised on 1st December; this recognized Germany's claim to "equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations". After a further adjournment the conference reopened on 2nd February, 1933, with Germany back at the council-table. But it was a Germany with Hitler now in command, and less likely than before to submit to any degree of tutelage on the part of others. Moreover, on 24th February, Japan notified the League of her intention to resign, an event which did not improve the atmosphere for disarmament.

In March, 1933, Ramsay MacDonald, Britain's Prime Minister, arrived in Geneva with a new Draft Convention, drawn up in considerable detail. It recognized the German claim to equality, suggested figures for all armed forces, provided for the reduction of offensive weapons, proposed international supervision of armaments, and incorporated other schemes which during the previous discussions had seemed acceptable to most of the delegates.

The Draft Convention also recommended the total abolition of naval and military aircraft. When this topic was under discussion the British delegate at the conference insisted on the right to bomb outlying districts for "police purposes". Critics of the Government deprecated this attitude, and hinted later that it had prevented an agreement on the whole question of bombing being reached. In a propagandist pamphlet issued in 1935 with an approving foreword by the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, this was denied. "The reason for the reservation with regard to bombing in outlying areas was, as the British delegate explained, not military at all. It was included merely to facilitate police work and to protect the lives of the peaceful inhabitants in areas where the movement of the forces of law and order on the ground was slow and difficult." Moreover, a Government spokesman made it quite clear in the House of Commons later that "if the reservation stood in the way of a general settlement, the British Government were quite ready to abandon it".<sup>1</sup> Lord Londonderry, a delegate on the Air Committee of the Conference, gave but lukewarm support to the proposals about aircraft. What his opinions were he disclosed in a speech to the Lords in

<sup>1</sup> See *Hansard*, Vol. 280, 5th Series, pp. 370-71.

May, 1935. He said that, as Air Minister at the time when the Disarmament Conference was sitting, he had kept impressing on his colleagues in the Cabinet the vital nature and place of the Royal Air Force in the scheme of Britain's defences. He continued: "I had the utmost difficulty at that time, amid the public outcry, in preserving the use of the bombing aeroplane even on the frontiers of the Middle East and India."

In June, 1933, after accepting the British draft proposals as the basis for a definite convention, the conference adjourned. Henderson spent this period of leisure in a tour of the chief European capitals to answer objections to the proposals and to smooth out difficulties that came to light. He learned that the French were not prepared to reduce their armed forces (the old cry of "security" was repeated) until the system of supervision, which was part of the plan, had been tried and found effective. To satisfy the French, Britain, the U.S.A., and other powers approved in October of modifications in the original Draft Convention. They agreed to a trial run of the machinery for supervision for four years while armaments remained at their existing level; only when this machinery was proved satisfactory would reduction begin and the powers, disarmed at the moment, be permitted to rearm on an equality with their neighbours. Germany refused to accept these changes, which were made public on 14th October, and withdrew first from the conference, and a few days later from the League.

Hitler stated in December the terms upon which he was prepared to return to the conference. These, which included a German conscript army of 300,000 men and the immediate surrender of the Saar, were rejected by the French. Diplomatic exchanges occupied the winter. In January, 1934, the British Government issued a White Paper with proposals that attempted to reconcile the French and German points of view. Anthony Eden, then Lord Privy Seal, made a European tour, as Henderson had done, to discover the views of various Governments. All was in vain. The French demand for "guarantees" was still insistent, and, when the German Budget showed a very large increase in expenditure on armaments, it became plainer than ever that a deadlock was inevitable.

On 29th May the Disarmament Conference started its final session, and adjourned indefinitely on 11th June. It had failed completely, but its failure was concealed by the appointment of various committees to continue the discussion of such questions as regional security pacts, the manufacture and trade in arms, and the air menace.

Actually the conference had merely proved that there was no agreement possible among the powers on any concrete matter relating to disarmament. By the autumn of 1934 every European nation, with Germany in the van, was committed to extensive schemes of both military and air armaments.

In the early 'thirties the League suffered blows from which it did not recover: the defiance of Japan, the failure of the Disarmament Conference, and the withdrawal of Japan and Germany. This was but a beginning. In a year or two the ineffectiveness of the League, as an instrument for preserving peace or for protecting the weaker powers against an aggressor, was to become even more apparent.



## CHAPTER XX

### GERMAN REVOLUTION, 1933

THE German Revolution of 1933 was the work of the Nazi Party, and the history of that party is the history of the leader, Adolf Hitler himself. Hitler, the son of a minor customs official, was born at Braunau on the Inn in 1889. The neurotic child of a neurotic, repressed mother, in the words of S. H. Roberts,<sup>1</sup> Hitler apparently did not pass a very happy childhood. He loved his mother, but merely respected his domineering father, the more so as the elder Hitler was determined to make his son an official like himself, while Adolf's ambition was to be a painter. The details of Hitler's life are told by himself in *Mein Kampf*, but Rudolf Olden<sup>2</sup> points out that, in recalling the story of his early days, Hitler is both vague and inconsistent, and that the autobiography is not too reliable a source of information. Moreover, Hitler's romanticism tended to colour disagreeable incidents in his early life, and to give them an interpretation, when he wrote his story, which, while it gratified his own self-conceit, was not one that an impartial historian could accept as accurate.

At school Hitler apparently learnt easily when he cared, but did not pay much attention to his work. The studies which interested him most were Geography and World History. His father died when Hitler was fourteen, and a year later his schooldays came to an end. Then for four years or so he lived with his mother in Linz, profitless years during which he drifted aimlessly without setting his mind to any definite course of work. When he was nineteen his mother died, and Hitler betook himself to Vienna. His ambition was to enter the Academy of Arts there in order to study painting, but the drawings which he submitted were not considered good enough, and so this career was closed to him.

He was poor and wretched in Vienna ("the saddest period in my life,"<sup>3</sup> he wrote), sleeping at times in a casual ward with the beggars

<sup>1</sup> *The House that Hitler Built.*    <sup>2</sup> *Hitler the Pawn.*

<sup>3</sup> *Mein Kampf* (1939 edition, translated by J. Murphy).

and outcasts of the city. He earned a precarious living, "first as a casual labourer and then as a painter of little trifles".<sup>1</sup> He detested the workmen with whom he was forced to mix, and the Jews whom he saw everywhere in the Imperial capital. He was shy, except when some political subject came up for discussion, and then no one could keep him quiet or stop the flood of speech that tumbled from his lips.

In 1913, after five years in Vienna, Hitler moved to Munich, and felt then that he had arrived "homé". He brought with him, besides his detestation of workmen and Jews, an unshakable belief in the superiority of the German race. He was a nationalist, with a burning contempt for the Poles, the Czechs, the Hungarians, and the other "inferior" peoples who thronged the streets of Vienna. At Munich he was happy, although, as in Vienna, he made but a scanty living by some sort of painting work, no longer, however, carried out in an ambitious spirit as an end in itself or as a preparation for an artistic career, but merely to earn a livelihood. His study was now politics; nothing else had the same interest for him. He read newspapers and pamphlets, and harangued and argued in the beer-halls of Munich, where the tolerant Bavarians listened to him good-naturedly. But life held out few prospects for him, since he was incapable of settling down solidly to work, and the declaration of war in 1914 was in the nature of a deliverance. He recalled his emotion in *Mein Kampf* with the words: "I am not ashamed to acknowledge to-day that I was carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, and that I sank down upon my knees and thanked Heaven out of the fullness of my heart for the favour of having been permitted to live in such a time."<sup>1</sup>

Joining the German Army as a volunteer, he served throughout the war, mainly (with the rank of corporal) on the regimental staff. He took a fair share in the fighting, and gained a number of decorations, including the valuable Iron Cross of the First Class. What feat he performed in order to earn this distinction is not absolutely clear, for his biographers have given various accounts of more than one act of valour. The most popular explanation, and the one accepted by Hitler's friends, is that, while acting as a despatch bearer, he captured single-handed in no-man's land a band of Frenchmen, the number varying between 7 and 20. ("Surrounded them?" caustically inquired an opposition paper.) It is said that Hitler himself corroborated this story in a general way to a couple of journalists

<sup>1</sup> *Mein Kampf* (1939 edition, translated by J. Murphy).

in 1932. But a certain vagueness clothes this episode in Hitler's military career, as also other episodes in his early life. In 1916 he was wounded and spent five months away from the front. In October, 1918, he was gassed, and was in hospital when the news of Germany's defeat and the Republican Revolution came to him. "I then decided," he wrote in *Mein Kampf*, "that I would take up political work."

But he did not leave the army immediately. He continued to serve with the garrison troops in Munich, and undertook in 1919 his first "purely political activity", which his opponents have since designated as spying. Apparently the politically minded corporal was detailed to frequent the beer-halls of Munich and to mix with the workmen in their meetings, in order to convey to his superiors the state of public feeling or to report anything untoward that was brewing. It was in the course of this work that he came in touch with a small German Workers' Party, numbering about 60 members. The nationalist and racial ideas for which the leaders of this party stood appealed to Hitler, and he determined to join it. In July, 1919, he became No. 7 on the committee. He was not content to remain long as an underling, but soon forced himself to the front. His skill as a popular speaker had by this time become known, and in October, 1919, he was appointed official propagandist of the party, which was no longer working in an aimless way and with little solid backing behind it, but in which Captain von Epp, Commander of the Munich Garrison, and his staff, including an unknown captain called Ernst Roehm, were taking a keen interest. Roehm induced a number of the officers and men of the garrison to join the group, which now changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' (or, in shortened form, Nazi) Party, and adopted the swastika as its symbol.

In February, 1920, a definite programme of Twenty-five Points was drawn up. In this programme was expressed the determination of the National Socialists to free Germany from the shackles of Versailles, and to form a "union of all Germans, on the basis of the right of self-determination of all peoples, into a Greater Germany". Combined with this nationalism were promises of a Socialist character, likely to attract the workers and the middle-class. The Nazis undertook, for example, to destroy "the thralldom of interest" by abolishing unearned income, to break up the large stores and let out their premises to small business men, to nationalize the big trusts, to institute profit-sharing schemes for the workers, and so on. In

1928, when farmers were impoverished, agrarian reforms were added to the programme.

At the beginning of 1921 the Nazi Party had about 3000 of a membership, and Hitler, who was now the recognized leader, had already in mind the two principles which were to form the basis for a rapid development of the party. He believed first of all in force and terrorism, and in 1922 he instituted and trained a semi-military group of Storm Troopers (S.A.), whose original function was to keep order at the public meetings of the party. This they did with a thoroughness that verged frequently on brutality. Neither heckling nor interruption was allowed, and even the mild shout of *Freiheit* (Freedom)—the slogan of the Social Democrats—brought immediate punishment on the offender, who found himself flung from the hall by Hitler's vigorous followers. Later, as the Nazi Party gained more adherents, the Storm Troopers became active in the streets, fighting with Communists and other enemies of the National Socialist gospel. Both the Social Democrats and the Communists had their private militias, the *Reichsbanner* (founded in 1924) and the Communist Red-Front Fighters' League respectively.

A second principle which guided Hitler's activity was based on his oft reiterated contempt for the undisciplined workers, whom in the mass he considered stupid and cowardly. He would give them "bread and games"—that was all they wanted. They were born but to obey and to be ruled by a master class built up from elements of a better race. Hitler did not attempt to use reasonable argument or logical analysis in the violent speeches he addressed to his audiences, which, once the Nazi party was firmly established in Munich, grew larger every month. He concentrated on one or two points which he wished to impress upon his hearers. These he repeated times without number, working himself into a passion of unreasoning hate against some of his opponents—the Jews, the Marxists, the Social Democrats—until, with the perspiration pouring down his cheeks, the stream of words broke and his last stumbling utterances were drowned in frenzied shouts and wild applause. Yeats-Brown described in these words the mature Hitler when he delivered a three-hour oration at the Kroll Opera House in February, 1938: "Even during a solid hour of statistics he kept everyone galvanized by the cadence of his sentences. During the rhetorical passages his voice mounted to the pitch of delirium: he was a man transformed and possessed: we were in the presence of a miracle: fire might have fallen from heaven or the chandelier of the Opera House might

have come crashing down: the tension was almost unbearable until the passionate voice was drowned by the cries of those who listened: cries of suspense released.”<sup>1</sup>

Hitler knew that the Nazi Party could never hope to do much without the solid support of influential men in the country. He made as many contacts as he could with officers in the army and officials holding responsible positions. He thought himself in luck's way when he got into touch with General Ludendorff, who had been second-in-command to Hindenburg during the Great War, and who was now living in retirement in Munich. Ludendorff was a convert to the theory that Germany in 1918 had been betrayed by Jewish-Marxist traitors in Berlin, and he was eager to take part in any *Putsch* which aimed at overthrowing the Republican Government. The outcome of the alliance of Hitler and Ludendorff was a farcical rising in Munich on 8th November, 1923, which ended on the following day with the flight of Hitler from the scene of a skirmish between his followers and a body of police. He was later arrested and condemned to a period of detention in a fortress. This lasted but six months—months not unprofitably spent by the Fuehrer (i.e. Leader) in dictating to his secretary, Rudolf Hess, who shared his captivity at Landsberg, the first part of the monumental *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), a book that became the bible of the Nazi movement.

By the time Hitler was released, the German Government had determined to make an effort to fulfil the conditions of the Versailles Treaty, and a period of comparative peace in international affairs (1924–29) was beginning. Germany became superficially prosperous, since industry, fed on foreign loans, waxed fat; and while the nationalists, including the discontented officers, still kicked restlessly against the humiliation of defeat, the mass of the people was inert and not in the pliable mood (which was to come a few years later) for the demagogue to mould to his will. In May, 1924, the Nazis gained 32 seats in the Reichstag, with a voting strength of 1,900,000. This was before the Dawes Plan was approved. In December, when Germany saw some hope of relief from the torments inflicted on her by the Victor Powers, the Nazi Party polled only 900,000 votes, and the number of its deputies was reduced to 14.

But a change took place when the world slump at the end of the decade started to affect Germany. In September, 1930, the number of Nazi supporters had increased to nearly 6½ million, and the party had 107 representatives in the Reichstag. Hitler could look forward

<sup>1</sup> *European Jungle*.

now with greater confidence to the fulfilment of his dream of leading the German nation—the real German people—in its fight against the disruptive forces of Jews, Communists, the Versailles Treaty, Pacifists, Internationalists, and all the other enemies against whom he had inveighed for years. His policy of nationalism combined with Socialism was one that aimed at attracting the largest mass of the people. He had expressed repeatedly his contempt for majorities, but now he was willing to offer almost anything to anyone to get support: land to the peasants, work to the unemployed, State offices to the Party officials, a place in the regular army to the enthusiastic Storm Troopers.

Heinrich Brüning, leader of the Centre Party, and “the most enlightened and civilized statesman that modern Germany had produced”,<sup>1</sup> was appointed Chancellor in May, 1930. He was the last defender of the Weimar Constitution against the threat of dictatorship that came from both the Nationalist Party and the Nazis. But the economic collapse of Germany in 1930 was too much for him. He could place a ban on the Storm Troopers and clear them from the streets, but he could not prevent tens of thousands of new recruits—the unemployed—pouring into the Nazi ranks and swelling the clamour for the overthrow of the Government. The policy which Germany adopted to withstand the economic slump was to enter into a “voluntary blockade” behind high tariff walls, and to subsidize agriculture. Through emergency decrees—this was the only way by which Brüning could rule at all—the Government got month after month a firmer grip on the economic life of the people. There was a serious fall in Germany’s exports—as much as 35 per cent—and as the normal number of people who depended for their livelihood on the export trade was in the region of 10 million, the ranks of the unemployed swelled dangerously. Then the wheat, which was grown with State subsidies, could not be sold, for the starving people had no money to buy bread, and to save the Junker landowners in East Prussia from ruin the Government came to their assistance with a direct payment of a milliard marks. The misuse by many of the Junkers of their share of this *Osthilfe* was a scandal that came to light shortly afterwards, when von Schleicher was Chancellor.

The rest of Brüning’s programme was on comparatively orthodox lines to save the country from bankruptcy: he reduced wages, dividends, and poor relief. He held his position as Chancellor, not

<sup>1</sup> *Inside Europe*: Gunther.

with the authority of the Reichstag behind him, but at the whim of the President. In May, 1932, Hindenburg (President since 1925) brusquely refused to sign a further series of emergency decrees intended to balance the Budget by increasing taxation and reducing pensions. What probably offended the President most was a proposal of Brüning's to settle unemployed men on the bankrupt Junker estates along the Polish frontier. This "Bolshevism" was too much for the landowners, among whom was Hindenburg himself, and Brüning was forced to resign.

He was succeeded on 1st June by Franz von Papen with a Cabinet of Barons in whose orthodoxy the President could trust. Von Papen had the support of the large-scale industrialists and others whose interests seemed to be threatened by the Socialism of the Nazis. The growing strength of this party was shown when Hitler opposed Hindenburg in the Presidential election held in the spring of 1932. The old marshal topped the poll, but in the second ballot <sup>1</sup> as many as 37 per cent of the electors voted for the Nazi leader. With the appointment of von Papen as Chancellor, it was necessary for a Reichstag election to be held, for in theory the government was still based on the democratic principles of the Weimar Constitution. The July election was another triumph for Hitler. The Nazi Party polled nearly 13 $\frac{3}{4}$  million votes and, with 230 seats, had the largest representation in the Reichstag. Hindenburg summoned Hitler and offered him a share in von Papen's National Government, but the Fuehrer demanded too much and, bitterly angry, was dismissed with nothing. He hoped to embarrass von Papen in the Reichstag, but the Chancellor promptly dissolved this assembly, and continued his predecessor's practice of ruling by decree.

Von Papen's plan was to steal part of Hitler's thunder—to support a thoroughly nationalist programme and thereby detach from Hitler's banner the nationalist followers to whom the Socialism of the Nazis made no appeal. The Social Democratic leaders in the Prussian Government were turned out; they went "without a blow, like so many hired servants", boasting that "by their reasonableness they had saved Germany from a blood-bath".<sup>2</sup> Virtually a Nationalist dictatorship was instituted throughout the country,

<sup>1</sup> In the first ballot President Hindenburg did not gain the necessary absolute majority, and so a second ballot was required. The result of the election was:

Hindenburg ..	.. 19,300,000—53 per cent.
Hitler ..	.. 13,400,000—37 per cent.
Communist ..	.. 3,700,000—10 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> *Germany Puts the Clock Back*: Mowrer.

with State control over the Press and the wireless. Communists were cast into prison, and Jews dismissed from public service. There was no longer a ban on the Nazi Storm Troopers (it had been raised on 4th June), and again the streets of Berlin and other large towns re-echoed to the Horst Wessel Song (the anthem of the Nazis), to the shout of " Banners up, close the ranks, Clear the streets for the brown battalions!", and to the din of clashes between the Nazis and the Communists. Between 1st June and 20th July the number of political assaults in Prussia alone was 20,322, in which 72 persons were killed and 497 seriously wounded. The estimated number of victims of political feuds in Germany in 1932 was 250 dead and several thousand wounded.<sup>1</sup> Von Papen satisfied the hunger of German nationalism with more nutritious fare. At Lausanne he persuaded the Allied Powers virtually to renounce reparation payments. It was while he was Chancellor also that Germany's demand for equal armaments with the Victor Powers was presented to the Disarmament Conference at Geneva, and when this claim was not conceded Germany's representatives withdrew from the conference.<sup>2</sup>

Von Papen was successful in weakening the Nazi front, for in the Reichstag elections held in November, 1932, Hitler lost 2 million votes, and the number of his deputies was reduced from 230 to 196. The Communists, on the other hand, increased their number from 89 to 100. This Reichstag sat three days (the previous one had sat eleven), and then it was dissolved. Hindenburg replaced von Papen by General Kurt von Schleicher, who had the confidence of the Reichswehr and was supposed also to have influence with the trade unions. But he could not withstand the opposition directed against him. He made the land-owning class, of which he himself was a member, angry and suspicious by airing the *Osthilfe* scandal, and by a very mild agrarian programme which envisaged the settlement of small-holders on a tiny fraction of the great estates. Hugenberg, an important industrialist and newspaper magnate and the leader of the Nationalist Party, joined with von Papen to persuade Hindenburg to dismiss von Schleicher. There was no one left but Hitler, and after a period of intrigue, with plot and counter-plot in which von Papen, von Schleicher, and Dr. Hugenberg took part, the Nazi Fuehrer was offered the post of Chancellor. His acceptance, on 30th January, 1933, was accompanied by the promise that the Government would be Nazi-Nationalist in composition—not one merely

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 210.



of his own supporters—and that he would strictly observe the constitution. Like other of his promises, this one was speedily broken by Hitler. Von Papen's immediate reward for his part in the intrigue was the office of Vice-Chancellor.

Preparations were now made for the usual election that followed a change in the Government. This was fixed for 5th March. The Nazis, not too confident of success at the polls, took measures to crush their opponents, particularly the Communists. The pace was set by General Goering, one of Hitler's chief henchmen, who was appointed Reich Commissioner in the Prussian Home Office. He dismissed all anti-Nazi officials in Prussia, stopped anti-Nazi propaganda, and broke up anti-Nazi meetings. His instructions to the police were roughly in the form: "Shoot the members of organizations hostile to the State. Shoot first and inquire afterwards. Whatever the consequences I shall protect you. On the other hand, if any man through mistaken caution fails to use arms he may expect to be punished."

But this drive against the Communists was comparatively mild until 27th February, when the Reichstag buildings in Berlin were fired by incendiaries and partly destroyed. At the scene of the fire a weak-witted Dutchman, Marinus van der Lubbe, was arrested. It was a God-given sign, in the words of Hitler, and he and his colleagues were not slow to take advantage of so opportune an event. They accused the Communists of having set fire to the Reichstag, and spoke of it as a beacon that was intended to kindle revolution all over Germany. That this did not happen was due, said Hitler, to the steps which he took immediately he realized the significance of the conflagration.

/ A few hours after the discovery of the Reichstag fire the Nazi machine got systematically to work. Known opponents of the régime, including those Communist deputies in the previous Reichstag who were at hand, were seized and thrown into prison. Within a few days 5000 arrests had been made throughout Germany.<sup>1</sup> Socialist and Communist newspapers were suppressed. Hitler proclaimed that he had evidence of a widespread Communist revolution that would have broken out had he not been in time to crush it. It was in this atmosphere of hatred and calumny and oppression, with incessant street-fighting in the large towns, that the election of 5th March was held. In *Hitler the Pawn* Rudolf Olden hints that the Nazis, with control of the election machine, probably condoned

<sup>1</sup> *Hitler the Pawn*: Olden.

some trickery in their own favour. In particular, the device of the *Wahlschein*, which allowed a voter absent from his home to record his vote, was, in Olden's opinion, liable to misuse; one man with a number of forged *Wahlscheine* might vote even twenty times. In some places the votes recorded exceeded by thousands the number of resident voters; a suspiciously large number of people seemed to vote away from their homes. Whatever truth there is in this allegation is comparatively unimportant, for, despite the intensity of the Nazi propaganda and the intimidating appearance of Storm Troopers in the streets and at the polling-booths, the result of the ballot was not the victory that Hitler had hoped for. The Nazis gained 92 seats, but the Communists lost only 19. The election results were:

Nazis	..	..	..	..	288
Socialists	..	..	..	..	120
Communists	..	..	..	..	81
Centre Party	..	..	..	..	73
Nationalists	..	..	..	..	52
Other Parties	..	..	..	..	32

The victory of the Nazis was scarcely conclusive. They and the Nationalists together represented only 51 per cent of the electorate. The exclusion from the Reichstag of the Communist deputies, who were, in fact, under arrest or in hiding, eased the situation, and Hitler was assured that, with the Nazi terror behind him, he could overawe the waverers when the Reichstag met and force them to accede to any measures he might propose. The Nationalists were his allies at this point; they were soon to be brought to heel, and willy-nilly to obey the edicts of the Chancellor whom they had put in power.

The Reichstag fire provided international news for some time. Hitler stuck valiantly to the story that the fire was intended as the signal for a general Communist outbreak which was to convulse Germany and bring about a state of anarchy. He assured the Press that he had irrefutable evidence of this Bolshevik plot, evidence which was being withheld from publication merely until inquiries were complete. In an interview which he gave to the *New York Staatszeitung* he said:

"When on that night of the fire in the Reichstag and in the Berlin Castle we received appeals for help from all parts of Germany by telephone, telegraph, and wireless, telling us of the approaching Bolshevik

conspiracy and revolution, I determined to set in motion all the forces, all the Storm Troops at my disposal. 'Bend or break,' was my watchword. The revelations made two hours later proved how right I was. On the immediate occupation of public buildings, including the university, the libraries and numerous district council offices, in Berlin alone fuses, petrol-soaked tinder and explosives were discovered. If in that decisive hour I had not acted in the interests of peace and order against the Bolshevist attempt to set Germany aflame, not only the Reichstag and the castle, but all the public buildings of Germany, and—who knows?—perhaps of all Western countries would to-day be a heap of ashes."<sup>1</sup>

Hitler promised judicial proceedings which would "open the eyes of the world to the sensations of that night". These duly took place before the Supreme Court at Leipzig, and the eyes of the world were opened, not, however, to the menace of Bolshevik revolution, but to the treachery of the Nazis themselves. Five men were accused of complicity in the burning of the Reichstag: van der Lubbe, the Dutchman who had been arrested in the building and who had confessed to the crime; Torgler, a Communist deputy of the Reichstag; and three Bulgarian Communists. The legal advisers and the Intelligence Service of the Nazi Government slipped up badly. They had had seven months to prepare the trial, but the charges they brought against the accused, apart from the half-witted Dutchman, were clearly without any foundation. The witnesses for the prosecution were obviously bribed hirelings of the Nazi Party or officials terrified to offend their masters. Dimitroff, one of the Bulgarians, was the hero of the trial. Despite the danger of his position, surrounded in a foreign country by men who would have had no scruple about killing him and were restrained from doing so only by the publicity with which the proceedings at Leipzig were conducted, Dimitroff, with a bravado that threw the Nazis into a frenzy of anger, coolly tore the evidence offered to the courts to shreds, and time and again hinted at the direction to which what was true in the evidence pointed: namely, that the guilty incendiaries were members of the Nazi Party themselves. After a trial lasting 57 days the judges delivered their verdict, which was that Bolshevism, that vague and terrifying ogre, was responsible for the crime, but that the guilt of the actual accused, except the self-condemned Dutchman (he was later executed), had not been proved. So ended the famous Leipzig trial, which was designed to condemn Communism before the world. Instead, the general opinion of the world was that the Nazis had stupidly and thoroughly accused and

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *One Man Against Europe* by Heiden.

convicted themselves. The fuses and the petrol-soaked tinders never saw the light of day, nor did the other evidence of a general Communist uprising which Hitler alleged he had in his possession. Olden<sup>1</sup> pointed out that in a speech which the Fuehrer delivered to the world in May, 1935, on the subject of Communist atrocities, he tabulated strikes, brawls in the streets, and so on, but spoke not a word about the Reichstag fire.

But long before the Leipzig trial, the fire had served its purpose. The new Reichstag met on 21st March, 1933, and granted to Hitler dictatorial powers for four years, with the right, moreover, "to establish the supremacy of the Nazi Party in all legislative and municipal assemblies throughout Germany". Democracy in Germany, long a-dying, received at last its death-blow. The era of Nazi dictatorship, the building of the Third Reich, had begun, and by July, 1933, it was well on its way to completion. An edict of 7th April empowered the Chancellor to appoint Reich Governors in all the German states. Key posts throughout the whole country were seized by the Nazis, and the policy of centralization, begun by von Papen, was continued systematically until the Governments of the federal states ceased to exist as independent units, and the states themselves became merely provinces of the Reich.

The Nazi gospel, with its principle of supreme leadership, could brook no rival, either in the administration of the provinces or in the existence of independent parties. The Socialist and Communist Parties were crushed at the beginning of the Revolution, but it was not long before the others were also dissolved. The last to go were the Nationalists, the allies who had helped Hitler to power. Too late they discovered that the monster they had created was capable of overthrowing them. In June, 1933, Hugenberg resigned from Hitler's Cabinet when his party was dissolved and, although remaining a member of the Reichstag, retired to the country and took no further active part in politics. Along with the political parties disappeared the semi-military organizations. That of the Communists, the Red Front, was immediately disbanded, and soon the Republican *Reichsbanner* and the Nationalists' *Stahlhelm* suffered the same fate. Of the private militias those of the Nazis, the S.A. (*Sturm Abteilung*) and the S.S. (*Schutzstaffel*—the élite of the Nazi troops) alone remained.

In November, 1933, a plebiscite was held by Hitler to receive the approval of Germany's millions for his foreign policy. It took

<sup>1</sup> *Hitler the Pawn.*

place just after Germany left the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations. It was the first of a series of plebiscites conducted on strict Nazi principles. The voters are offered no alternative question on which to vote. They may register disapproval of the issue presented to them, but they do so at the risk of bringing the full wrath of the totalitarian state on their heads. Konrad Heiden, an authority on Nazi politics, criticizes the plebiscites and elections in these words:

“The absence of any alternative question or candidate, the general conviction that the Government violates the secret of the ballot-box, the certainty that violent persecution would follow discovery and, finally, a sense of the political futility of voting against the régime, since contrary votes will probably be ignored or falsified, these things prevent an incalculable number of opponents of the Government from voting honestly.”<sup>1</sup>

In the November referendum on foreign affairs, more than 40½ million (96.3 per cent of the electorate) cast their votes in favour of the Fuehrer's policy. In the Reichstag election held at the same time the Government (there were no opposition candidates) received over 39½ million votes, while under 3½ million were invalid. By the end of 1933 the Nazis had definitely arrived.

<sup>1</sup> *One Man Against Europe.*

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE THIRD REICH

**B**Y the beginning of 1934 Hitler, the Fuehrer of the Third Reich, a National Socialist state, was an object of hero-worship to a great mass of the German people, particularly the young. In their eyes he could do no wrong. To the outsider Hitler did not seem a man of outstanding mental stature. His path to power had been cleared by others besides himself, and luck had played a good part in his success. He seemed transparently honest, but only in the sense that, while he said one thing one day and something quite contradictory the next, he had a remarkable power of self-delusion and was unable to recognize any inconsistency in his utterances. According to a statement of his own, he loathed making decisions. His gift for emotional oratory stood him time and again in good stead. Tears came easily—at least before the dignity of the Chancellorship had had time to settle on him. “We can always get Adolf to weep,” Goering is said to have suggested when a difficult situation arose.<sup>1</sup> He disliked Berlin, and left it willingly for the modest luxury of his chalet at Berchtesgaden. He enjoyed opera, particularly the works of Wagner. His reading was confined to official documents and newspapers. He used men as a substitute for books; he loved talks from which he could learn something, and was consummately skilful in getting everything he wanted out of the other person.<sup>2</sup> Quite a large number of Germans believed that he was directly inspired by God, and that therefore he was infallible.

One of Hitler's chief helpers was Hermann Goering, forceful, direct, brutal of character, who, when the Nazis came into power, was rewarded with a number of offices, including command of the Air Forces. He loved uniforms (his nickname was the “clothes-horse”) and display of all kinds. The brain of the Nazi cabal was Dr. Joseph Goebbels, who became Minister for Propaganda and Public Enlightenment. Less prominent, but equally faithful and valuable to Hitler, were his other lieutenants, including Rudolf Hess,

<sup>1</sup> *The House that Hitler Built*: Roberts.

<sup>2</sup> *One Man Against Europe*: Heiden.

his deputy in all matters connected with the Nazi Party, Dr. Wilhelm Frick, Reich Minister of the Interior, and Heinrich Himmler, Chief of the Gestapo (Secret Police).

By the summer of 1934 Hitler had a firm grip on the whole of Germany, but among his followers there was no unanimous approval of the policy he was carrying out. On 30th June a "Second Revolution" occurred (there had been vague rumours of this some weeks before) when Hitler struck down a number of the Party, once his most faithful friends, but now alleged to be traitors both to the Fuehrer and to the State. For three days, but principally on the night of 30th June-1st July the condemned Nazis were seized by S.S. men and dragged summarily to execution or shot where they were found. Hitler himself went by air with Goebbels to Munich on 30th June, and was present that same night at an inn in Wiessee, a village in the neighbourhood, when Captain Roehm, Commander-in-Chief of the S.A., Edmund Heines, Chief Group Leader of the S.A., and others were arrested. Within a few hours they were shot. The plans of the Fuehrer were well laid, and in Berlin and other parts of the Reich bands of S.S. men set to work at the same time, shooting those whom the State had marked as the enemy, and incidentally paying off old scores. Among those who died in this "night of the long knives" were S.A. leaders (Roehm, Ernst, Heines, &c.), a Catholic group, including Fritz von Bose and Edgar Jung, private secretaries to von Papen, and a number of men killed to satisfy the private vengeance of Hitler<sup>1</sup> or his friends. Von Schleicher and his wife were also shot. Brüning had gone into exile shortly before this, but had he been in the country he would almost certainly have been among the victims.

On 13th July Hitler delivered a speech in the Reichstag justifying the blood-bath. He asserted that the moment was one of dire peril: "If anyone flings at me the reproach, that I did not make use of the regular Courts of Justice for judgment, I can only say to him: in

<sup>1</sup> Hitler did not forgive easily. Among the killed was Gregor Strasser, at one time the most influential man in the Nazi Party after Hitler, and the loyal supporter of the Fuehrer for 12 years. But Strasser, when the Party seemed in decline in November, 1932, was prepared to co-operate with von Schleicher's Government. Hitler, without any cause, accused his friend of treachery, and Strasser resigned all his offices in the Party.

Hitler avenged himself on his enemies of a more distant past. Von Kahr, Commissioner-General of Bavaria in 1923, gave his word under duress to join in the Hitler-Ludendorff rising. Then he declared that the promise extorted from him at the point of the pistol was null and void, and turned against the *Putsch* leaders. In 1934 General von Kahr was an old man, who had taken no interest in politics for years. Yet he was shot in the "clean-up" of June.

that moment I was responsible for the fate of the German nation, and I myself was the Supreme Court of the German People in those twenty-four hours." He talked vaguely of a plot against himself and the nation, in which a "foreign statesman" was involved. He inveighed against the homosexual practices of Roehm, Heines, and other of the victims ("I want my S.A. leaders to be men and not ridiculous monkeys"), but these practices had been common knowledge in Germany for years. Hitler confessed to the death of 77 "conspirators", but this was considered by many journalists and others to be a gross understatement. Douglas Reed reported that, according to a German diplomat, the exact number was 1176.<sup>1</sup>

There was no plot against Hitler or the State in the sense that the Fuehrer implied, but there was considerable dissatisfaction in the ranks and among the leaders of the S.A., the Nazi Storm Troopers. After Hitler had risen to power, the S.A.—a large unwieldy body of only half-trained men—became somewhat of a nuisance to him. Now he could depend on the regular Reichswehr and on his picked bodyguard, the S.S. Many of the S.A. leaders, on their part, had reason to be discontented with the policy Hitler was pursuing. The Socialist part of the Nazi programme, the part which they favoured, had promptly been thrown overboard when Hitler gained the Chancellorship. Moreover, Captain Roehm wished the S.A. to be incorporated into the Reichswehr, or at least attached to it. This the Reichswehr officers refused; they objected to a union of their perfectly trained troops and a comparatively unruly rabble. In brief, Roehm stood, with considerable backing among his followers, as the representative of (a) the Socialist tendencies of the S.A., and (b) the claim of the S.A. to incorporation into the regular army with himself, probably, in a position of high command. Hitler had to choose between the Reichswehr and the S.A. He chose the Reichswehr and rid himself of the "mutinous" S.A. commanders. That Captain Roehm was the man to whom he owed most, and without whose help he would not have reached the pinnacle to which he had climbed—that was forgotten.

The Roehm Revolt was but an episode in the early history of the Third Reich, and Hitler's suppression of it was accepted apparently by his subjects as just and necessary. But the Fuehrer did not fall into the mistake of allowing the intelligent German to think, or at least to utter his thoughts, too freely. Liberalism ranked with Bolshevism, Democracy, Internationalism, and Pacifism as one of

<sup>1</sup> *Disgrace Abounding.*



the major sins. The State was ruled under an emergency decree of 28th February, 1933, which said:

"Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 153 of the Constitution of the German Reich are declared invalid until further notice. Restrictions on personal freedom, on the right of the free expression of opinion, including the freedom of the Press and rights of association and assembly, infringements of the secrecy of letter and parcel post, telegraph and telephone, orders for house-searches and confiscations, and restrictions on property beyond normal legal limits are admissible."<sup>1</sup>

To justify this (permanent) dictatorship, with its special laws, its special courts, its secret police, its concentration camps, and its indefinite periods of "protective arrest" for enemies of the State, Nazis claimed that it was necessary for the struggle against their ruthless enemy, Bolshevism. Hitler never tired of reminding the adult German that he, and he alone, had saved both Germany and Western Europe from the anarchy of Communism. Nor was the youth of Germany left uninstructed. The Nazi leaders argued that, if their doctrine seized the mind of the child early enough, and was inculcated without ceasing in the years of adolescence, there was little fear of the Bolshevik germ eating its way into the healthy flesh of the state. Education was, therefore, organized on strictly National Socialist lines, and, as early as 1933, "had to be founded on the principles of biological and racial science, with which—in compliance with the Fuehrer's wish—all school-children were to be made familiar."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, precautions were taken that the teachers professed a uniform National Socialist outlook, so that the German schools would not "for a second time become the victims of that spirit of disunion which prevailed during a period when party strife and a lack of creative principles had their counterparts in education".<sup>2</sup> The National Socialists did not make the mistake committed by the Republicans of allowing subversive propaganda to be disseminated in the schools by hostile teachers.

In *Germany Speaks*, Dr. Kurt Johannsen, Managing Director of the Hause Press, justified the censorship of the Press and the use of propaganda in the service of the Government. His contention was that even in democratic countries the Press could not be said to be free in any sense: either it was venal as in France, or under the control of powerful newspaper owners as in Britain and the U.S.A.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *One Man Against Europe* by Heiden.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Rust, Reich Minister of Education, in *Germany Speaks*.

The German argument for a Government Press was summed up in the sentence: "The German people decided clearly for National Socialism, and there is no further justification for continuing a campaign of Press criticism." In other words, once the totalitarian state is in being, no criticism of the rulers—no matter what their policy—is permissible, or even necessary.

The law in Nazi Germany has unlimited power over the subject. One special clause incorporated into the Criminal Code in June, 1935, enables a judge "to inflict punishment for acts, which—although not thus specifically mentioned in the existing code—are yet of such a nature as to demand punishment in pursuance of the general tenor of the law and in accordance with healthy national sentiment".<sup>1</sup> This gives the Nazi judge wide discretionary powers. Any action, in fact, may in particular circumstances be accounted a criminal offence, although the offender is not aware in law or in justice of his crime until he is actually sentenced, for only then does the deed he has committed become a crime.

Repression and the transforming of the German people into a machine were necessary, in Hitler's eyes, for the economic and other achievements which he planned. He tackled the economic problem, not on orthodox lines, but with a fixed determination to improve in some way the position of the millions of unemployed and starving Germans. He got rid of the Jews for one thing—they were left to find help from men of their own race who still had means—and replaced them in official and other posts by Germans. Women were also urged to desert the labour-market,<sup>2</sup> for the perfect type of Nazi womanhood is the *Hausfrau*, who rears her large family in a healthy National Socialist atmosphere. Hitler also embarked upon large and expensive schemes of public works, which reduced unemployment to some extent, but at the cost of a rise in the price level within the country. The State Labour Service, which was instituted immediately the Nazis came into power, helped to lower the unemployed figure. The purpose of the service was twofold: its economic value was in the conversion of large waste tracts into arable land; its educational value lay in the physical and intellectual instruction which was given at the Labour Camps, and in the breaking down of class barriers by bringing together, for a period of manual

<sup>1</sup> *Germany Speaks*.

<sup>2</sup> In *Germany Speaks* it is emphasized that women are not excluded from industry or public service in Germany. In 1935, 11,500,000 women were employed in the various professions and occupations.

labour, young men of all classes.<sup>1</sup> The success of the scheme as a means of solving the unemployment problem was vouched for by Hitler in an address on 1st May, 1934, when he said that, while there were six million unemployed in the state before he came into power, "we have introduced Labour Service and we have reduced the number of unemployed by more than half."<sup>2</sup> He continued: "The whole idea underlying the Labour Service is to promote understanding between all classes and thus to strengthen the spirit of national solidarity."

A comprehensive Four-Year Plan was drawn up by the Nazi Government to develop the resources of the country. In the economic sphere the ultimate aim of the Third Reich was, as far as possible, autarky, i.e. economic self-sufficiency. With recollections perhaps of Britain's effective blockade during the Great War, Field-Marshal Goering, addressing the International Chamber of Commerce in Berlin in July, 1937, said: "The condition of dependence upon the greater or lesser goodwill of foreign powers is, for a self-conscious people that has the desire to live, simply intolerable."<sup>3</sup> A policy of "planned economy" was announced by the Government in the autumn of 1934. Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, President of the Reichsbank, was the dictator in whose hands lay the carrying out of the intricate financial and economic devices which accompanied this "New Deal". Imports had to be regulated with care so that the balance of trade remained in Germany's favour, since she required a surplus of foreign credit to buy essential raw materials that she lacked. Normal trading methods were thrown overboard by the German Government, and barter arrangements entered into with Hungary, Rumania, and other Balkan countries. Germany bought large quantities of goods in these foreign markets, but, instead of paying for them in cash, retained the greater part of the purchase price in "blocked marks" in Berlin. A country which traded with Germany under this system could now get what was due to her only by purchasing goods in Germany. The Finance Minister of such a country was driven by necessity to encourage traders to import German goods in order to reduce the credit balance of "blocked marks" in Berlin. The ultimate aim of this commercial policy was to gain for Germany economic and, in effect, political control over the Danubian and Balkan states. Well might R. S. Hudson of the British Department

<sup>1</sup> There is a Labour Service for women also in Germany. The young girls, living in communal camps under strict discipline, help neighbouring farmers either in the fields or in the home.

<sup>2</sup> *Germany Speaks*.      <sup>3</sup> *Economic Self-Sufficiency*: A. G. B. Fisher.

of Overseas Trade complain that Germany seemed likely to have "an economic stranglehold over these countries". Schacht justified this policy, and also the intensive effort to increase the production of raw materials in Germany, by pointing to the difficulty of selling Germany's manufactured goods in foreign markets owing to the protective tariffs that were everywhere in existence.<sup>1</sup>

The drive to make Germany self-sufficient in the matter of food-stuffs achieved considerable success, but by 1936 it was plain that the country could not produce all that she needed of certain goods, like fats and fodder. To get these, and to get raw materials for which she could not make substitutes, Germany was still dependent on foreign markets. A second Four-Year Plan, of which Goering was put in charge, was announced in September, 1936. This plan concentrated on a speeding up in the production of *ersatz* materials, expensive substitutes for rubber, cotton, &c.

The policy of autarky was intended to protect the Third Reich from its enemies in Europe; equally important for that purpose was the building up of powerful armed forces. By 1935 a tremendous rearmament programme upon which Hitler had started was well under way. In the House of Commons Winston Churchill stated that Germany spent 800 million pounds in armaments in 1935,<sup>2</sup> six times the sum spent by Britain in the same year. In March, 1935, compulsory military service was reintroduced in Germany. It was, however, in the creation of a mighty Air Force that Germany (the Air Minister was Goering) strove to outpace her rivals. The exact number of first-line machines she had was not known, but it was computed that in 1935 she had between 3000 and 4000.

The financing of this rearmament programme, in addition to extensive schemes of public works, including magnificent motor-roads, was the task of Dr. Schacht. He obtained the necessary supplies "by a skilful system which combined the non-payment of old debts, the prohibition of certain imports regarded as superfluous, the dumping of certain export articles at uneconomic prices, the substitution of a complicated method of barter for cash payments, and a number of other similar dodges".<sup>3</sup> Credit in the country was virtually "mobilized", and by means of forced loans, "free-will" offerings for the Air Force and other State services, the conversion of the public debt to a lower rate of interest, and so on, money was somehow or other forthcoming. It is said that Schacht

<sup>1</sup> *Germany Speaks*.    <sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 315, 5th Series, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *One Man Against Europe*: Heiden.

warned the Government in the beginning of 1936 that its policy was leading to a dangerous financial instability in the country, and eventually, in November, 1937, since the Nazis found his theories too doctrinal and orthodox for their taste, Schacht resigned from the post of Economic Minister, which he had held since 1934.

At the Nuremberg Party Rally in September, 1936, Hitler was able to point with pride to the achievements of his régime since 1933. He claimed that unemployment had been reduced from six to one million, that a great increase in agricultural production had to be recorded, and that the national income had risen from 41 to 56 milliard Reichsmarks.

At this congress Hitler reaffirmed Germany's claim to the return of her pre-war colonies, and urged it with increasing emphasis. He refuted Britain's contention that there was no obstacle in Germany's way to prevent her buying raw materials where she wished, and that therefore colonies were not needful for this purpose. Germany demanded the return of her colonies for three reasons: for the supply of raw materials, as an outlet for her surplus population, and to raise her prestige internationally. Arguments are at hand to prove that the first two reasons are not of very great weight. Even if her pre-war colonies were returned to Germany, she could import from them only a small amount of one or two essential raw stuffs; for the others she would still be dependent on foreign powers. As territories suitable for the settlement of Germans on a large scale, Germany's colonies were not so used before 1914, and probably would not be used for that purpose to any extent had she them back again. While colonies are of undoubted advantage to a Capitalist state, this advantage is frequently overrated. They are useful economically, since the natives of a colony are more likely to buy the goods of the mother country to which they belong than those of other countries, and a colonial power can pay for its purchase of raw materials in its own currency. More important, however, are the strategic value of colonies as naval and air bases, and their military value as a source of colonial troops. Since it is impossible to apportion the colonial territories of the world fairly and equally, it is said that to solve the colonial question the best that can be hoped for is to make access to all raw materials as easy as possible for every state by reducing tariffs, &c. But Germany's demand for colonies is difficult to answer "so long as the Great Imperial Powers, and especially Great Britain, make no move to get rid of currency restrictions, to lower tariffs, to extend the mandate principle

to their own colonies, and to offer their mandated territories for international administration".<sup>1</sup>

Another demand which became audible soon after the Third Reich was in existence was for the union of all Germans to form a Greater Germany on the basis of the right of self-determination enjoyed by all nations. Linked with this was a clamant cry for *Lebensraum*, living room for the German race. The annexations which Hitler proposed in *Mein Kampf* were not on a modest scale. Since the frontiers of states are man-made, he argued, men may alter them, and then he visualized the future in these words:

"To-day there are 80 million Germans in Europe. And our foreign policy will be recognized as rightly conducted only when, after barely a hundred years, there will be 250 million Germans living on this continent, not packed together as the coolies in the factories of another continent but as tillers of the soil and workers whose labour will be a mutual assurance for their existence."<sup>2</sup>

That the policy of the Nazi Government to incorporate all German-speaking peoples into the Third Reich would be pursued without wavering became obvious in 1938; in that year Austria and the Sudetenland were joined to Germany proper.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*.

<sup>2</sup> *Mein Kampf* (1939 edition, translated by J. Murphy).

## CHAPTER XXII

### JEWS AND CHURCH IN GERMANY

“ONE People, one State, one Church” was the slogan of the National Socialists. To weld the people into a “unitary nation”,<sup>1</sup> its government based on the principle of leadership,<sup>2</sup> and to inculcate the Nazi *Weltanschauung* (world-outlook) were the avowed intentions of the rulers of the Third Reich. Bound up closely with the Nazi philosophy was the twofold idea of Blood and Soil (*Blut und Erde*). This reverence for race, with the need for a contented peasantry rooted to the soil if the race is to survive,<sup>3</sup> was an integral part of Nazi policy and Nazi propaganda. In the Nazi view races in the world are not of equal value. The greatest of them is the “Aryan race”, of which the Nordic Germans are the outstanding examples. Other races are inferior, and destined therefore to be under the heel of the Germans. The “myth of an ‘Aryan race’” is described by Julian Huxley in a pamphlet<sup>4</sup> as one of the “fallacies of unscientific ‘racial’ conceptions”, and he sketches briefly the growth and development of this myth. A Frenchman, Count Joseph de Gobineau (1816–82), proved to his own satisfaction that “throughout the prehistoric ages advances in culture had been entirely due to peoples whom he identified with Nordic,

<sup>1</sup> Steps in unity were:

- (a) 12th March, 1933: the swastika flag became the national symbol of the Third Reich alongside the black-white-red flag of pre-war days.
- (b) 31st March, 1933: an Act provided that party representation must be uniform in all state Parliaments so long as they existed.
- (c) 7th April, 1933: the Chancellor was empowered to appoint Reich Governors for all states in Germany.
- (d) 30th January, 1934: the Parliaments of the individual states were abolished and their sovereign rights transferred to the Reich.

<sup>2</sup> In August, 1934, when Hindenburg died, the office of President was abolished. Hitler proclaimed himself Fuehrer, as well as Chancellor, an action of which 90 per cent of the German people approved in a plebiscite.

<sup>3</sup> “Nations which sacrificed their peasantry to a mammonism not rooted in the people vanished for ever from the stage of history”: Hitler, quoted in *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism* by Brady.

<sup>4</sup> “Race” in *Europe*.

Germanic, or 'Aryan' peoples, these terms being regarded as interchangeable, though including not merely Germans but also Scandinavians". This theory, Huxley points out, is quite untenable, but it gained a great hold in Germany, and was exploited in pseudo-scientific writings of Houston Stewart Chamberlain and others. "Among the absurdities connected with the development of the theory it is perhaps sufficient to mention that Jesus Christ and Dante have been turned into 'good Teutons' by German writers." The existence of a Nordic race is purely hypothetical. The bulk of the population in Germany, Britain, France, and other countries contains elements derived from many different sources. The Germans, just like the Jews, are of mixed origin.

But the idea of the superiority of the German race appealed to the Nazis, and it became a vital part of their philosophy. In the process of co-ordinating the state it was needful to subjugate foreign elements among the people, and in particular the Jews were the object of Nazi hatred and oppression. Robert A. Brady<sup>1</sup> tabulates the main reasons for the Nazi attack on Jews:

- (1) By outlawing Jews the Nazis provided work for their own supporters.
- (2) The Nazis worked on the well-known principle that, to quell unrest and to distract people's minds from the real causes of their misery, it is useful to "invent" a menace against which their anger can easily be directed. The menace of the Jews was, therefore, an "invented terror".
- (3) The Jew, with his international connections, was a convenient scapegoat upon whose shoulders all the obvious abuses of Capitalism could easily be laid.
- (4) On the other hand, the Nazis attacked the Jew as the creator of Bolshevism, class war, and anarchy throughout the world. "By one of the most curious bits of reasoning to be found anywhere in modern propagandist literature, the Jews are held to be not only responsible for the creation of (Jewish type) Christianity, Capitalism, and Bolshevism, but these also are held to be merely different phases of the same thing."
- (5) Finally, the anti-Jewish campaign was a means by which the Nazis brought concretely to the mind of the ignorant

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism.*



their ideas of race, the physical characteristics which distinguished one race from another, and the superiority of the Germans over these inferior peoples.

There was no weapon in the armoury of persecution that the Nazis did not use against the Jews: the boycott of Jewish premises; the confiscation of Jewish businesses; the imprisonment of Jews in concentration camps; the expulsion of Jews from all official posts, from the professions, and, as far as the economy of Germany could suffer this without undue harm, from all industry and commerce. Many Jews fled into exile, including men noted in different walks of life, like Einstein and Reinhardt. While no large-scale pogroms occurred like those in Russia under the Tsars, for example, repeatedly there were semi-organized attacks on Jews in the streets and in their homes; and, according to many writers, Jewish prisoners in concentration camps suffered, as also did many Communists, such brutal punishment that numbers of them succumbed to the treatment they received.<sup>1</sup> To humiliate and torture the Jew merely because of his race, no matter whether he was an inoffensive creature who had lived for years in Germany or not, that only seemed to satisfy the sadistic appetite of many of the Nazi Party.

The Nazi case against the Jews is that in the time of the Republic the Jews, by the number and importance of the positions they held, almost dominated the life of the German people; the purity of Nordic culture was contaminated by this alien influence. The following figures,<sup>2</sup> showing the percentage of Jews in important professions in Berlin, illustrate the "seriousness" of this alien menace before the Nazi Revolution and the cleansing of the body politic and economic began:

Chemists	..	..	..	..	32.2 per cent
Doctors	..	..	..	..	47.9 "
Lawyers	..	..	..	..	50.2 "
Newspapers editors		..	..		8.5 "
Producers and Stage managers	..				14.2 "
Dentists	..	..	..	..	37.5 "

" At the same time, the Jews were a determining factor in those political parties which were against any reconstruction on national lines. As to the so-called State Party, for instance, 28.6 per cent of

<sup>1</sup> See White Paper, Cmd. 6120, 1939, for evidence of the brutality prevalent in German concentration camps.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Walter Gross in *Germany Speaks*.

its Parliamentary members were Jews, and in the Social Democratic Party the figure was 11·9 per cent.”<sup>1</sup>

That the influence of the 600,000 Jews who lived in Germany in 1933 was out of all proportion to their numbers is an undoubted fact. Hitler deduced from this that “there can be no good Jew”, a conclusion which expressed an emotional reaction but hardly one founded on reason. Yet on this principle he and his party acted. Not only were the Jews driven from political and economic life, but the racial theories which the Nazis claimed to be the groundwork of their state demanded the formulation of laws against contamination by the Jews of the pure Aryan blood of the Teutons. With this in view the Nuremberg Laws of September, 1935, were passed:

- (1) Only people of German or kindred race could become citizens of the Reich. All others, in particular Jews, were aliens with no political privileges.
- (2) To protect the German race marriages and extra-marital relations between Jews and German nationals were forbidden, under penalty of imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>2</sup>
- (3) Jews were forbidden to employ as a domestic servant a German woman who was under 45 (later reduced to 35) years of age.

The Jew-baiter *par excellence* was Julius Streicher, Governor of Franconia, and a friend of Hitler's since the early days of the Nazi movement. In a weekly paper, *Der Stürmer*, which he edited, Streicher vilified in crude drawing and coarse phrase the Jews and any Germans who still had dealings with them. His attack was an endless variation on the theme: “The Jew is forced by his blood to ruin and to decompose all other races. He is driven by his blood to ravish non-Jewish women and girls.”<sup>3</sup> Travellers in Germany found that, while the average German was contemptuous or ashamed of the obscenities of *Der Stürmer*, there was a general consensus of opinion that the Nazi attack on the Jews was quite a good thing. The alleged identification of the Jews with Bolshevism was frequently given as a cogent reason for the persecution. “For many Germans,” wrote

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Walter Gross in *Germany Speaks*.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Reed records in *Disgrace Abounding* the pertinent observation of a “most intelligent and cultured and open-minded Jew in Budapest”: “After all, the Nuremberg Laws are only the translation into German of our own Mosaic Laws, with their ban on intermarriage with Gentiles.”

<sup>3</sup> *Der Stürmer*, October, 1931—quoted in *Germany Puts the Clock Back* by Mowrer.

J. A. Cole, "a Marxist is a Jew and a Jew is a Marxist. . . . Germany takes pride in being the first country to perceive this Jewish menace and to tackle it."<sup>1</sup>

S. H. Roberts<sup>2</sup> said that he met nobody in Germany who adopted an apologetic attitude, nobody who saw anything wrong in the attack on individuals irrespective of their personal worth. "The most tragic thought of all is that Germany is behind Hitler in his campaign against *Rassenschande* or race-defilement. I spoke about it to peasants and great industrialists, army officers and factory labourers; and all approved of it, although a few regretted the tone of *Der Stürmer*." The German is thorough. An official decree of Königsdorf proclaimed that "cows purchased either directly or indirectly from Jews are not allowed to be served by the communal bull".<sup>2</sup>

In a chapter in *Disgrace Abounding* entitled "How Odd of God", Douglas Reed, a severe critic of the Nazi state, discusses the Jewish question, having studied Jews and their influence in many countries in Europe. He emphasizes that there is a problem, and that the Jews themselves are largely responsible for much of the hatred they have inspired among Gentiles. The only solution is to give the Jews a real national home, so that in other countries there will be no pretence of Jewish assimilation, and the Jews will live merely as foreigners, with the prestige and power behind them of a state and Government of their own. Reed concludes that the Jews never lose all feeling of Jewish cohesion no matter how much they may seem to be "naturalized", that everywhere they join together to squeeze non-Jews out of any particular business or calling they control, and that they labour to increase Jewish power and wealth to the detriment of the non-Jewish community. Driven from one country, a Jew easily settles in its neighbour, and is one day a good German, the next a good Austrian, the following week a good Czech, and later a good British or American citizen. Other critics have pointed out that to generalize about a whole race invariably gives but a false picture. There are good and bad Jews, just as there are good and bad Gentiles; there are aggressive Jews with a keen sense of race, just as there are Christian Prime Ministers, for example, who strive to fill their Cabinet with former pupils from their own school and exclude "outsiders" from other public schools.

Although the Nazi Government strove to deprive the Jew of any chance of earning a living in Germany, it showed no eagerness to allow him to leave the country, for there were obstacles put in the

<sup>1</sup> *Just Back from Germany*.

<sup>2</sup> *The House that Hitler Built*.

way of his emigrating. It seems, in the words of Oswald Dutch,<sup>1</sup> that "Germany actually aims at creating the outward impression of wanting to rid herself of all her Jews at the shortest possible notice, but in practice intends to use every administrative device to prevent them from leaving the country. This results in the long run in a kind of zigzag policy, first conceding this and that to the Jews after the severest persecution, then increasing again their tribulation."

In April, 1938, Jews were compelled by Governmental decree to declare the extent of their property, both in Germany and abroad, "with a view to the State's utilizing it". The climax of the German persecution of the Jews was reached in November, 1938, after the murder in Paris of Herr vom Rath, a secretary of the German Embassy, by a young Polish Jew, Grynspan. This was followed by pogroms all over Germany, which were said by Dr. Goebbels to be "spontaneous manifestations of indignation", but the verdict of foreign observers was that they were organized or at least encouraged by the Government. Jews were attacked in the streets, their houses and shops looted and wrecked, and synagogues burned to the ground. The police and the fire-brigades remained mainly inactive while the destruction was going on. Thousands of Jews were arrested, and many prisoners executed inside concentration camps.<sup>2</sup> These outrages roused feelings of horror outside Germany. The United States ambassador was recalled from Berlin "for consultation", and President Roosevelt said that he could scarcely believe that such things could happen in the twentieth century.

Then came the "official" punishment of the Jews for the murder of the German diplomat. A fantastic fine of a thousand million marks (about 83 million pounds) was imposed on them. Decrees were passed forbidding them to engage in the retail and export trades, to frequent any place of amusement, or to attend the universities—up to this time a small proportion of Jews had been allowed to study in the German universities. The Jews were themselves required to pay for the damage done to their property, the Government confiscating for its own use such compensation as was due to individual Jews from insurance companies. The need for more intensive effort than before to assist Jews to leave Germany (this work was in the hands of an international committee meeting at Evian<sup>3</sup>) was widely recognized. One difficulty which faced those

<sup>1</sup> *Germany's Next Aims* (pub. Arnold).

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 25th November, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> The Evian Conference, called on the initiative of President Roosevelt, was opened on 6th July, 1938, with 31 states represented.

who were eager to help the Jews was that the Nazi Government would allow Jews to emigrate only after they had surrendered virtually all their property and were destitute.

While the suppression of the Jews in Germany was comparatively easily carried out, Hitler, in the process of co-ordinating the Nazi state, entered into a more serious conflict with the Evangelical Church of Germany. His aim was to create a unified Protestant Church, subservient to the principles of the Nazi gospel; this included a ban on the pacific teaching of orthodox Christianity. The task of building this "German" Church was undertaken by Dr. Ludwig Müller, appointed Reichsbishop in September, 1933. Müller, naturally, was a firm believer in authoritative control in the Church, and despised the democratic basis on which it had up to this time rested. His was the mind of a soldier; he ordered services, for example, to be opened and closed with the Nazi salute. But there was considerable opposition to the Nazi religious policy. This was centred in Dr. Martin Niemöller, Lutheran vicar of Berlin-Dahlem, who formed a Pastors' Emergency Federation to resist the German Christians. By the middle of May, 1934, several hundred pastors—the opponents of Dr. Müller—were said to have been suspended, while others were under arrest. The State used its usual means to crush opposition: raids by the secret police, propaganda against the rebels, the suspension or the arrest of the most outspoken leaders, and so on.

In September, 1935, Hitler appointed Hans Kerrl as Reich Minister for Church Affairs, giving the State thereby an absolutely direct control over the activities of the Church. A Reich Church Committee was appointed with power to coerce the Evangelicals and to dismiss recalcitrant Church officials, but the rebels continued to defy the Nazi persecution. In 1937 they refused to take part in elections for a synod to draw up a new constitution for the Church, and Hitler, faced with this opposition, had to drop the scheme. In February, 1938, the Evangelical leader, Pastor Niemöller, who had been under arrest since July, 1937, was sentenced to seven months' imprisonment. He had already served this sentence and was released, only to be retaken immediately into "protective custody", and confined in the Dachau Concentration Camp at the will of the Fuehrer. He was still in prison at the end of June, 1939, when it was announced that he had been dismissed from his church at Dahlem, and that he would be relegated to the status of an itinerant preacher.

The Roman Catholic Church was also uneasy in the Nazi State,

since it could scarcely accept without demur the impiety of the Nazi claim: "To serve Hitler is to serve Germany; to serve Germany is to serve God."<sup>1</sup> In July, 1933, a concordat was arranged by von Papen with the Pope, who promised that priests would take no part in politics, in return for Hitler's assurance that the State would not interfere with the Roman Catholics and their normal activities. The concordat was not observed. The Nazis closed Catholic schools, particularly in Bavaria, banned Catholic newspapers, and, when protests were made, imprisoned members of the clergy. The leader of the Roman Catholics in their resistance to the Nazis was Cardinal Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich.

F. A. Voigt in *Unto Cæsar* contrasted the attitude of Lenin and of Hitler to religion in these words:

"Lenin is a would-be destroyer of religion, Hitler is a corrupter of religion. The National Socialist attack, accepting as it does much of liberal theology and natural religion, is far more dangerous to Christianity than the godlessness of Marxism. Lenin would destroy the altar or at least promote its decay. Hitler would preserve the altar while replacing the cross of Christ by the Swastika."

At the Nazi Party Rally in 1938, Alfred Rosenberg, who is responsible for the education of the people in spiritual matters and in the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, expressed the Government's view of religion in these words:

"I do not hesitate to say, and I believe that I can speak in the Fuehrer's name as well, that the Catholic Church and the Protestant Confessional Church as it is to-day will have to disappear from the life of our nation."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The House that Hitler Built*: Roberts.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 11th November, 1938.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### GERMANY AND HER NEIGHBOURS

THE transformation of Germany into a unified Nazi state had many repercussions in Europe. Germany's neighbours were confronted now with a power avowedly militaristic in policy, if not yet armed to carry out any dangerous military adventure. Anticipating a future in which the Third Reich might be strong enough to make demands upon them, both great and small powers in Europe started to insure themselves against this threatened danger.

To France in particular the rise of an aggressive Germany was a matter of very great moment. A state obedient to the will of one man,<sup>1</sup> with opposition ruthlessly crushed, was a menace to the security of France, where the democratic system of government seemed to encourage disunity in the nation. After the *Union Nationale* fell with the secession of the Socialist supporters of the Government, ten French Cabinets held power in turn in the years 1928-32. These were constituted mainly from the Centre and Right Parties in the Chamber. Then in 1932-34 six Cabinets with a bias to the Left were in office. The ministers were Radical Socialists, who received support from the Left Parties. The main reason for the resignation of one Prime Minister and the appointment of a successor was the difficulty the French Government found in balancing the Budget. But however much each party in France disapproved of the domestic policy of its rivals, all were united in their detestation of the Nazi rule in Germany.

The French Parliamentary system was ineffective. Instead of there being two or three main parties as in Britain, the individualistic

<sup>1</sup> Two quotations from *Mein Kampf* express Hitler's opinion of France:

"Only in France there exists to-day more than ever before a profound accord between the views of the stock-exchange, controlled by the Jews, and the chauvinistic policy pursued by French statesmen. This identity of views constitutes an immense danger for Germany. And it is just for this reason that France is and will remain by far the most dangerous enemy."

"As far as concerns Germany, the danger which France represents involves the duty of relegating all sentiments to a subordinate place and extending the hand to those who are threatened with the same menace and who are not willing to suffer or tolerate France's lust for hegemony."

French voters supported a large number of different parties, so that it was only by forming a coalition that any minister could hope to reach office. Moreover, changes in the Cabinet were easy. Unlike the usual practice at Westminster, the defeat of a ministry in the French Chamber does not mean a general election; only every four years is this appeal to the electorate made. In the early 'thirties the defeated Cabinet merely resigned, a fresh reshuffle took place, and a new coalition was formed with, probably, some of the ministers of the previous Cabinet still in office. In France, wrote Gunther, "politics is largely a matter of personality; deputies are individualists rather than members of a rigid party machine".<sup>1</sup>

The Stavisky scandal, which saw the light in the beginning of 1934, disclosed hidden pools of corruption in French official life, and roused such a storm of anger throughout the country as threatened to shatter the democratic constitution of Parliament. Stavisky, a Russian Jew who had graduated in Paris from petty crime to financial swindling on a large scale, contrived a fraudulent issue of Bayonne bonds. This was discovered, and Stavisky, to escape arrest, killed himself in January, 1934. The truth about Stavisky then became known. In 1926 he had been arrested on a charge of fraud (the sum involved was £70,000), but by means of a "pull" he exercised he had managed to obtain a "provisional" release pending his trial, and this trial had been postponed nineteen times, while the financier lived a merry life of ease on the ill-gotten gains he was able to make. Rumours of a network of corruption—the extent of Stavisky's influence among the police, the minor officials who were his hirelings, etc.—came to the ears of the excitable Parisians, and in February rioting against the Government broke out, in which Communists, Fascists, Royalists, and others joined. In the capital seventeen men were killed, and some thousands wounded. The Government, that of Daladier, fell and France seemed for a brief time on the verge of revolution. The danger passed. Gaston Doumergue (President, 1924–31) was recalled from his retirement to take office, and he proceeded to form a National Government.

Doumergue's first task was to restore the confidence of his countrymen in Parliament. This was needful, for democracy was at the moment suspect. The instability of successive ministries, moreover, had encouraged the growth of Fascist parties, the most important being the *Croix de Feu*, whose leader was Casimir de la Roque. Doumergue brought forward proposals for the reform of

<sup>1</sup> *Inside Europe*.



the Parliamentary system, but the Left wing considered these too Fascist in character, and forced the Premier's resignation in November, 1934. M. Flandin, his successor, succeeded in gaining the approval of the Chamber for changes in Parliamentary procedure, &c., which were less radical than those advocated by Doumergue. In 1934-35 France tried to set her house in order, for she knew that beyond the Rhine Hitler was grimly consolidating the power of the Third Reich.

With the rise of Hitlerism the attitude of the U.S.S.R. towards other European powers underwent a change. She no longer held aloof, but was ready to co-operate with other peace-loving nations to ward off the attack of an aggressor. Not only was Russia threatened in the west by the rise of Nazi Germany,<sup>1</sup> but in the east the imperialistic policy of Japan was also dangerous to her. Russia's willingness to take a place, as in pre-war days, in European society was welcomed by Britain, France, and other powers. France saw in Russia a potential ally, whose help was necessary if the security for which she had striven since 1919 was not to be completely undermined by a reborn Germany. Britain welcomed the Soviet's adhesion to the principles of the League of Nations, in order to strengthen this assembly now that both Japan and Germany had deserted it.

In June, 1933, at the time the World Economic Conference was held in London, M. Litvinov, the Soviet delegate, drew up a strict definition of an aggressor, leaving no loophole for the usual diplomatic evasions of an attacking power. This was adopted by the Security Committee of the Disarmament Conference, and on its basis Russia concluded a series of pacts of non-aggression and neutrality with the Baltic states, Poland, Rumania, Turkey, Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. In 1932 she had concluded a

<sup>1</sup> In *Mein Kampf* Hitler made no secret of his hatred of the Soviet rulers, and of the Nazi policy of expansion to the East:

"It must not be forgotten that the present rulers of Russia are blood-stained criminals, that here we have the dregs of humanity which, favoured by the circumstances of a tragic moment, overran a great state, degraded and extirpated millions of educated people out of sheer blood-lust, and that now for nearly ten years they have ruled with such a savage tyranny as was never known before.

"Therefore we National Socialists have purposely drawn a line through the line of conduct followed by pre-war Germany in foreign policy. We put an end to the perpetual Germanic march towards the South and West of Europe and turn our eyes towards the lands of the East. We finally put a stop to the colonial trade policy of pre-war times and pass over to the territorial policy of the future.

"But when we speak of new territory in Europe to-day we must principally think of Russia and the border states subject to her."

similar pact with France, but this was now felt to be too indefinite for the purpose of protecting the peace of the world, and in May, 1935, a more binding Pact of Mutual Assistance was concluded. A fortnight later a similar pact was signed by Russia and Czechoslovakia.

The rise of the Third Reich tended to weaken to some extent Poland's friendship for France. Poland was in the awkward position of a buffer state between two powerful nations, both of whom she feared. She could trust neither Germany nor Russia; for more than a century the greater part of her territory had been under the sway of these foreign powers. She was apprehensive of the wave of Communism that might one day sweep over her eastern frontier; equally she dreaded the demand that might be made by an armed Germany for the return of Danzig and the Corridor. While Germany was a member of the League of Nations and pursuing a policy of fulfilment that kept her, at least diplomatically, on friendly terms with France, Britain, and Italy, it was to Poland's interest to remain aloof from her western neighbour and to keep alive her friendship with France. For Germany might try to persuade the other Great Powers to agree to some measure of treaty-revision that would alter Poland's frontiers, and to resist such a proposal Poland could depend only on France. But with the rise of Hitler the situation was changed. Germany was an outcast, looking for friends. It was Russia who might now prove a danger to the Poles, Russia who was entering once again the arena of European conflicts. Poland was eager to place her relations with her western neighbour on a more friendly footing than before, and she succeeded in doing this on 26th January, 1934, when she signed a Ten-Year Pact with Germany, the signatories agreeing to renounce the use of force against each other, and to settle by direct negotiation any differences between them. Germany's reason for signing the pact was that her interest at the moment was centred in the Danubian Basin, and it was expedient to postpone the demands in connection with the Corridor and Danzig, which she intended to present at a later date to the Poles.

A contributory cause of Poland's *rapprochement* with Germany was distrust of her old ally, which had been aroused by France's adherence to a Four-Power Pact (1933), the child of Mussolini's brain. The purpose of this pact—it was signed by France, Germany, Italy, and Britain—was to effect a revision of the Treaty of Versailles, for Mussolini was convinced that, unless this was done, there could be no permanent peace in Europe. Even a hint of interfering with

the *status quo* brought forth immediate protests from the anti-revisionist group of nations (Poland and the Little Entente), and the pact which was eventually signed in June, 1933, was so emasculated as to be deprived of any value it originally had.

Apprehensive of the power of the Third Reich, Greece, Rumania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia signed a Balkan Pact in February, 1934, to protect with each other's aid their existing frontiers, and to work closely together in matters affecting the interests of all. Bulgaria refused to join this *bloc*, since she was not prepared to accept for all time the frontiers laid down by the Treaty of Neuilly. In March, 1934, a Danubian Agreement was concluded by Hungary, Austria, and Italy. The lines of common policy which the signatories agreed to follow were these: the maintenance of peace and the economic restoration of Europe, on the basis of respect for the independence and rights of every state; the friendly discussion of problems of particular interest to all of them; the removal of barriers to a freer exchange of their goods.

The country whose safety was most clearly menaced by the rise of Nazi Germany was Austria. Since the Great War Austria had been kept alive economically only by the loans and subsidies of the Great Powers. Although it was impossible for her, small and landlocked, to maintain herself in an independent way, she was prevented from uniting with any of her neighbours. Both union with Hungary and union with Germany were banned, the first by the Little Entente, the second by the Great Powers. Even a Customs Union which Austria formed tentatively with Germany in March, 1931, had to be abandoned under pressure from France.

In 1932 probably 80 per cent of the population of Austria was in favour of an *Anschluss* of some kind with Germany; by the end of 1933 at least 60 per cent were against it.<sup>1</sup> Austria wished at all costs to retain her independence, and she realized that, united with Nazi Germany, even the shade of her greatness would pass away, and she would become merely a province of a Greater Germany, her culture and her historic memories swallowed up in the maw of unification and co-ordination. But her position in 1933-34 was desperate, since there was disunity among her people and the enemy outside the gates was strong and ruthless. There was a Nazi Party in Austria, in whose favour the German Government poured a flood of propaganda into the country by wireless from Munich, by leaflets dropped from aeroplanes, and through secret agents who were well

<sup>1</sup> *Inside Europe*: Gunther.

supplied with money and arms. Dr. Dollfuss, the Chancellor, and his Government were bitterly attacked with all the invective of which the German Nazis were master.

Since the independence of Austria was a matter of importance to Mussolini in 1933, the Nazi attacks on the Dollfuss Government alarmed him. He was not unwilling, therefore, to make advances to France, Germany's inveterate enemy, in order to improve Franco-Italian relations, which had remained strained since the conclusion of the Great War. Apart from their private differences, an obstacle that kept the two Mediterranean powers apart was the hostility existing between their protégés in South-Eastern Europe. Italy was the patron of Hungary, a country which had never given up hope of treaty-revision, while France favoured the Little Entente. Between the Little Entente and Hungary there was a continuous coldness, since treaty-revision meant some change at the expense of the Entente.

With the hope of paving the way for some sort of reconciliation between the Little Entente and Hungary, the French Government invited King Alexander of Yugoslavia to pay an official visit to France. It was a tragic visit. At Marseilles, on 9th October, 1934, both Alexander and M. Barthou, France's Foreign Minister, were shot by the leader of a Macedonian Terrorist Organization. Hungary (and also Italy) had given shelter to political opponents of Alexander, and the Yugoslav Government threw upon Hungary the responsibility for the assassination of their king. A dispute developed, which, since it threatened to have serious consequences in Europe, was referred to the League of Nations. The League Council won a notable victory for peace by drawing up a diplomatic resolution that satisfied both parties, and so the matter ended.

M. Laval, Barthou's successor at the French Foreign Office, went on rapidly with the plan of conciliating Italy. He was successful, and on 7th January, 1935, a Laval-Mussolini Agreement was signed, the main points of which were:

- (1) The two powers expressed an identity of view on the principal problems of general policy.
- (2) They agreed to consult with each other should events threaten the independence of Austria. (Britain also joined this consultative pact.)
- (3) The colonial differences between France and Italy in Africa were settled: Italians in French Tunis were to be allowed

to retain their Italian nationality for the next two generations; Italy received strips of territory from France in West Africa and Somaliland, and also the right to buy some two to three thousand shares in the Jibuti-Addis Ababa Railway.

Mussolini was not too hard a bargainer, for he was absorbed at the moment in the preparations he was making for an attack on Abyssinia, which he felt quite sure Laval would not oppose. The French minister, on his side, was satisfied with his diplomatic success in ending a long feud with Italy and thus giving France greater freedom to cope with the danger that threatened her from the Rhine.

This danger was becoming more serious every month. The Germany of Hitler, so far from attempting to conciliate the Victor Powers, seemed eager to defy them. The Third Reich felt bound by no international obligations, and threw overboard orthodox diplomatic procedure in its relations with its neighbours. The matter of treaty-revision became acute, and Hitler started on what proved a successful policy of repudiation of various Articles of the Versailles Treaty, while skilfully bewildering the Allied Governments by producing peace plans that provoked discussion but led nowhere. The Fuehrer depended on lightning coups, carried out usually when international tension existed for some reason or other, or when there was apparent internal disunity in one or more of the democracies. The "era of surprises" began in 1935.

The year 1935 started, however, with the peaceful settlement of the Saar question. By the Treaty of Versailles the Saar was handed over to a League of Nations Commission to be administered for fifteen years. At the same time the coal mines in the territory were given to France to compensate her for the destruction wrought in her industrial areas by the Germans during the Great War. The Versailles Treaty provided for a plebiscite in the Saar in 1935 to decide the ultimate fate of the people. There were three choices: the retention of the *status quo* (i.e. the rule of a League Commission); union with France; or union with Germany.

For months before the plebiscite was due to take place, the Nazis carried out intensive propaganda among the Saarlanders. It looked as though the Saar might be a spark to set national jealousies and fears aflame, but fortunately the plebiscite was carried out with extraordinary success by the League. In December, 1934, Britain proposed, at Geneva, that an international force, excluding French

and Germans, should be formed to keep order in the Saar during the critical days preceding the actual voting. This was approved, and British, Dutch, Swedish, and Italian troops reached the Saar at the end of 1934. Their presence was a vital factor in the success of the plebiscite. The actual election, on 13th January, 1935, passed off quietly, and as 90 per cent of the electorate voted for union with Germany there was no dubiety about the result. On 1st March the Saar became part of the Third Reich. The League was also responsible for an agreement, which was satisfactory to both France and Germany, about the payment to be made to France for the surrender of the coal mines.

Hitler said: "With the return of the Saar there are no more territorial claims by Germany against France, and I declare that no more such claims will be raised by us. We are now certain that the time has come for appeasement and reconciliation. . . . We want to assure the world of our deep desire to preserve the peace. . . ." But the prospect was not too bright in 1935, for by then most European countries had accepted as necessary a policy of general rearmament, and this seemed to cast doubt upon the virtue of reconciliation and appeasement.

The British and French Governments were not slow to follow up the Fuehrer's words of peace, and in February, 1935, the advantage of an "Eastern Locarno Pact", which had been proposed by M. Barthou a year before, was again mooted. Barthou's idea was that the nations of Eastern and Central Europe (Baltic states, Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Germany) should subscribe to a Pact of Mutual Guarantee on the lines of the Locarno Treaties of 1925. In addition to this proposal, an Air Pact was suggested to Germany, by which the signatories of the Locarno Treaties (Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy) would pledge themselves to give assistance by air to any of their number who was the victim of air attack by an aggressor. The sponsors of the "Eastern Locarno Pact" could not have had much hope of a favourable reply from Hitler. That Germany would agree to any pact which bound her to accept the existing eastern frontier was unlikely; that, in addition, she would ally herself in any conditions at all with the Soviet was, in 1935, unbelievable. The German Government was non-committal about the Eastern Pact, but welcomed the proposal of an Air Pact, and suggested a meeting with representatives of the British Government to discuss this.

A meeting was arranged, but before it took place the British

Government issued a White Paper on Defence (4th March, 1935), with plans for rearmament and an explanation of why this was needful. Pointed references were made to the illegal rearmament which had been going on in Germany—"On the 28th November, 1934, His Majesty's Government drew public attention to the rearmament on which Germany was engaged . . ."<sup>1</sup>—and the conclusion reached that "this rearmament, if continued at its present rate, unabated and uncontrolled, will aggravate the existing anxieties of the neighbours of Germany and may consequently produce a situation where peace will be in peril".<sup>2</sup> These outspoken words offended the German Government. Hitler developed a "diplomatic" cold, and the Air Pact meeting was postponed.

It was now France's turn to provoke a tit for tat from Germany, and this she did with more serious results than had Britain. The "lean years" for conscripts were at hand in France—one of the penalties of four years of war—and the number of recruits suddenly dropped from 230,000 to 118,000. On 15th March M. Flandin announced that for men called up in 1935 the period of conscript service would be extended from one year to eighteen months, and that those called up in the following four years would serve two years. Hitler's reply came instantly. On 16th March the German Government issued a decree introducing compulsory military service throughout the Reich, the strength of the standing army to be 550,000 men. Dr. Goebbels assured a Press Conference that it was not Hitler's desire "to forge in the national armament of Germany any weapon of military aggression but exclusively of defence and the preservation of peace".<sup>3</sup>

France, Italy, and Britain protested against this unilateral violation of the Versailles Treaty, and France demanded a meeting of the League Council to discuss the matter. Hitler now addressed

<sup>1</sup> Baldwin's reference to Germany's air force in the Commons on 28th November, 1934, was bravely uttered but proved entirely false. He said: "Her (Germany's) real strength is not 50 per cent of our strength in Europe to-day. . . . His Majesty's Government are determined in no conditions to accept any position of inferiority with regard to what air force may be raised in Germany in the future." (*Hansard*, Vol. 295, 5th Series, pp. 882-883.)

<sup>2</sup> The White Paper continued: "His Majesty's Government have noted and welcomed the declaration of the leaders of Germany that they desire peace. They cannot, however, fail to recognize that not only the forces but the spirit in which the population, and especially the youth of the country, are being organized lend colour to, and substantiate, the general feeling of insecurity which has been incontestably generated." Statesmen were well aware in 1935 of the trouble that was brewing.

<sup>3</sup> This was part of Hitler's proclamation to the German people. Quoted in *One Man Against Europe* by Heiden.

a second invitation to the British Government to take part in a conference. This was accepted, and the meeting took place on 25th–26th March in Berlin, with Sir John Simon (Foreign Secretary) and Anthony Eden (Lord Privy Seal) representing Britain. The conversations in Berlin had little result, save to make clear what Hitler's intentions were. He was prepared to be content with his army of 550,000, air parity with Britain or France—with the proviso that Germany's air force might be increased if that of the Soviet became stronger—and 35 per cent of Britain's naval strength.

After the Berlin conversations a meeting took place at Stresa on 11th–14th April between Simon, Laval, and Mussolini. These statesmen drafted a joint condemnation of Germany's repudiation of the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty. This resolution was passed by the League Council, but nothing was done. Germany continued to carry on her rearmament programme with no concealment.

The European powers sought what safety they could. The "Eastern Locarno Pact" having fallen through completely, France had to be content with an alliance with Russia. Britain, for her part, saw in Hitler's proposal of a naval strength in ratio to her own one definite straw that might be seized, and without consulting France or Italy she broke the Stresa Front herself by entering into negotiations with Hitler. The outcome of the discussions was an Anglo-German Naval Treaty (18th June, 1935), by which Germany limited herself to a 35 per cent ratio with Britain in all categories of ships except submarines. In underwater craft she demanded parity with Britain, but promised that for the time being she would limit herself to 45 per cent of Britain's strength, and would not increase this without giving notice of her intention.

The breaking of the Stresa Front excited in France anger and suspicion against Britain. But the British Government considered that it was as well to save as much out of the wreck of the Versailles Disarmament Clauses as possible. Even the admission by Germany, before the negotiations leading up to the Naval Treaty began, that she had some submarines almost ready for launching, did not deter the Admiralty from concluding the agreement. In the House of Commons Anthony Eden, who had been promoted to Cabinet rank as Minister for League of Nations Affairs in June, 1935, explained the Government's point of view.

"It may be argued that the size of the programme which it is now revealed that Germany is already engaged upon is an argument against entering into fresh agreements with her; but surely the reverse is the



case. The very fact that Germany is shown to have rearmed so much already is the strongest possible argument for accepting her offer to limit the future course of her naval armaments."<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn of 1935 Mussolini started on his conquest of Abyssinia, an adventure which placed the French Government on the horns of a dilemma. Laval was unwilling to take any action against this aggression, since the Franco-Italian Pact, signed at the beginning of the year, was a diplomatic triumph, the fruits of which he did not wish to lose. On the other hand, Britain's friendship was equally valuable to France, and Britain expected France to collaborate with her, under the authority of the League of Nations, in applying sanctions against Italy. The Abyssinian War completely broke the Stresa Front. Britain's support of sanctions against Italy drove Mussolini into the arms of Hitler. The Franco-Italian Pact lost its validity as a token of friendship between the two Mediterranean powers, and the traditional Anglo-French *entente* was weakened by France's vacillation. The alignment of the powers was changing. The Fascist states, Germany and Italy, were moving closer together, while Britain, much as she might protest that she did not wish a recurrence of the pre-war system of opposing alliances, was being forced into such a system, since she was one of the democracies whom the Fascist powers hated.

While the Abyssinian conflict was raging, Hitler seized the chance for another coup. In March, 1936, his troops occupied the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland. The Fuehrer's excuse was that the Franco-Russian Pact infringed the Locarno Agreements. This action of Hitler's was carried out apparently against the wishes of his General Staff, who were convinced that France would march her forces against Germany. But France hesitated, and finally made no move. Hitler now produced a peace plan, the chief points of which were: a new demilitarized zone covering French, German, and Belgian territory (obviously unacceptable to France, who would not be prepared to destroy her elaborate Maginot Line of frontier fortifications,<sup>2</sup> which had taken years to build); a twenty-year non-

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 304, Series 5, p. 618.

<sup>2</sup> André Maginot, French Minister of War, was responsible for the elaborate system of fortification works constructed on the German frontier between 1929-36. The Maginot Line was later extended to the sea at Dunkirk and southwards to Jura on the Swiss frontier to protect France against an outflanking movement by Germany through Belgium or Switzerland. It is a tremendous and impregnable barrier—Maginot was determined that never again should France be invaded from the east.

Maginot was born in 1877, and in 1914 was an Under-Secretary for War. He

aggression pact with France and Belgium; a Western Air Pact; and the re-entry of Germany into the League of Nations. The League Council met in London on 19th March, 1936, and condemned Germany for her violation of both the Versailles Treaty and the Locarno Settlement. Negotiations were, nevertheless, entered into to try to reach an agreement with Germany. Hitler held a plebiscite on 29th March, and could point out that, since, of 45 million who voted, only half a million expressed disapproval of his action, he had the German people behind him.

The Fuehrer produced a second peace plan after the plebiscite, which was very similar to the first, but stated that Germany would rejoin the League only on condition that the Versailles Treaty was revised. Discussions continued. In May the British Government sent a note to Berlin asking for elucidation of some doubtful points in the peace plan, but to this communication Hitler made no reply. In August, 1936, Germany doubled her army by extending the period of compulsory service from one to two years. At the same time Hitler emphasized the additional military power that lay in some two million Storm Troopers and about 200,000 other trained men.

In October, 1936, at a meeting between Count Ciano, Italy's Foreign Secretary, and Hitler, an agreement was concluded about the general lines of policy which the two Fascist states proposed to follow in conjunction. The chief aim of this Rome-Berlin Axis was to undermine the influence of France and Britain in various parts of Europe and the world, and to build up a Fascist *bloc* to challenge the supremacy of the democracies. Outsiders had imagined that the difficult question of Austria would prevent any *rapprochement* between the totalitarian states. But Mussolini was grateful to Hitler for his refusal to join with the other European powers in applying sanctions against Italy, and he made up his mind that the sacrifice of Austria to Germany was worth making.

The lining-up of the Fascist powers against the democracies went on apace. In November, 1936, Germany and Japan signed an Anti-Comintern Pact, directed ostensibly against the Communist propaganda in foreign countries of the Comintern, whose headquarters were at Moscow. Actually, to the outsider, the agreement

insisted in joining the army as a private, was soon promoted sergeant ("The Sergeant" was his nickname for the rest of his life), and in 1916 was seriously wounded before Verdun. He was invalided out of the army and for the next ten or eleven years held various Government offices. Eventually, in 1929, he became Minister for War, and at once started experts to work on the Maginot Line, the dream of which he had cherished for many years. He died in 1932.

seemed in the nature of an alliance against a common enemy, Russia. A year later Mussolini subscribed to the Anti-Comintern Pact.

On the first day of November, 1936, Mussolini was tempted to twist the lion's tail, and to deny Britain's right to dominate the Mediterranean, which, in his opinion, was merely a "short cut" to Britain's outlying territories. In reply, Eden, who had been Foreign Secretary since December, 1935, assured the Duce that His Majesty's Government fully recognized Italy's vital interests in the Mediterranean, but insisted that it was a "main arterial road" to Britain's overseas possessions.<sup>1</sup> Later on in the month Eden spoke to his constituents at Leamington about Britain's obligations, and the use to which her arms would be put. "These arms," he said, "will never be used in a war of aggression. They will never be used for a purpose inconsistent with the Covenant of the League or the Pact of Paris." Then in greater detail he specified the objects for which Britain had rearmed: to defend her own territory and the territories of the British Commonwealth of Nations; to aid France and Belgium against unprovoked aggression; and to carry out her treaty obligations on behalf of 'Iraq and Egypt. In conclusion he reminded his audience that "in addition our armaments may be used in bringing help to a victim of aggression in any case where, in our judgment, it would be proper under the provisions of the Covenant to do so".

On 30th January, 1937, Hitler declared in a speech that the Versailles period was at an end, since he had now placed Germany on an equality with other European powers. He formally repudiated the "war-guilt" Article of the Versailles Treaty. The Disarmament Clauses of the treaty were now without meaning, the Rhineland had been occupied and fortified, reparations were long since past, and Germany had again absolute sovereignty over the Reichsbank, the Reichsbahn, and her waterways, including the Kiel Canal. "Within the realm of honour" Germany's requirements had been satisfied. It was not till 1938 that the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Versailles were to be violated for the first time.

In this January speech Hitler dilated on the Communist menace, from which, as he repeatedly claimed, he had saved both Germany and Western Europe. He repudiated every association with Russia beyond what was absolutely necessary to maintain commercial and other needful interests, and rejected the idea of ever concluding any treaty with the Soviet. Hitler's anti-Bolshevism was an important element in his foreign policy. While he seemed willing at times

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 317, 5th Series, pp. 282-283.

to conclude some sort of peace treaty with the Western Powers, he refused categorically to subscribe to any agreement to which Russia was a party. His aim was to ensure peace on the Rhine, so that if Germany started a war in the east there would be no interference in the rear. His anger against the Franco-Soviet Pact was provoked by the knowledge that, as long as it existed, Germany might in the event of war be faced, as in 1914, with enemies on two fronts.

Britain and France lost the diplomatic battle in 1936-37. France awoke to the fact that the system of security which she had patiently built against the rise of a powerful Germany was already being undermined. Belgium withdrew from the alliance with France which had been formed in 1920, and strove to regain the position of neutrality which she had held in 1914. France's friends in the east of Europe—Yugoslavia, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland—knew well that, with the occupation of the Rhineland, one of the bastions against German aggression had fallen. The Little Entente was now less inclined than before to depend solely on France as an ally, and resumed more freedom of action. In 1936 Yugoslavia negotiated treaties with both Bulgaria and Italy. It seemed possible that Yugoslavia and Rumania might drift under the influence of the Rome-Berlin Axis. M. Delbos, France's Foreign Minister, returned to Paris in December, 1937, after a three weeks' tour of Central and Eastern Europe. He was obliged to confess that "France's influence among her friends and allies in Central and Eastern Europe had fallen lower than most people in Paris suspected".<sup>1</sup> The only country upon whose faith France could depend was Czechoslovakia. Even the Polish Government was not so enthusiastic about the French alliance as it had once been. In an official speech Colonel Beck, Poland's Foreign Secretary, spoke the equivocal words: "The peculiarity of friendship is that, while each of the friends pursues his own aims and defends his own interests, he is able to consider with the greatest benevolence all the problems concerning the other".<sup>1</sup>

It was her alliance with the Soviet that France in 1937 was forced to fall back on for comfort. But Russia was rather a mystery. A succession of treason trials, in which some of the most important political and military Bolsheviks of the old school were condemned, roused suspicion that all was not right in the Soviet Union, and left the French wondering how far they were able with safety to rely upon her help against Germany.

<sup>1</sup> *France and Munich*: Werth.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### RUSSIA, 1933-38

THE U.S.S.R., which was in the fortunate position of having gigantic resources of her own to be developed, was anxious for peace during this period in order to carry out her far-reaching economic and industrial plans. Before the first Five-Year Plan was completed Gosplan was ready with a second, which started in 1933. Its general purpose was to remedy the defects of the first: to improve, for example, the quality of the goods produced, to provide a much better system of transport, and to get rid of obvious shortages in houses, &c. The Soviet intended to concentrate more than before on goods for consumption, and to treble the production of these. Meanwhile the development of Russia's heavy industries was to continue, and by intensive methods of cultivation the best made of the land, nine-tenths of which had by this time been collectivized.

For the first two years the plan showed satisfactory progress. Then in 1935 there was a tremendous and unexpected increase in output. This was due to the example of a Donets miner, called Alexei Stakhanov, who in August, 1935, hewed 102 tons of coal in the course of one shift instead of the 7 which the plan demanded.<sup>1</sup> Stakhanov's achievement was not the result of any new discovery. It depended on a careful division of labour (Stakhanov himself merely controlled a pneumatic drill—the loading of coal, the timbering of the shaft, &c., being done by others), and on an intelligent rationalization of the process. But the Press and the Government boosted Stakhanov as a model to be imitated by the rest of the workers, and a Stakhanovist movement swept the country. The essence of the movement was the individual's effort to find means of simplifying and improving his work.<sup>2</sup> There was no compulsion from above.

<sup>1</sup> *Russia under Soviet Rule*: N. de Basily.

<sup>2</sup> A correspondent (Sir Ernest Simon) to the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 27th November, 1936, described a visit he paid to a block of houses in course of construction in Moscow where a Stakhanovist bricklayer with two women assistants were employed. Each of the group of three was trained to do certain parts

Not all of the workers in the Soviet found this movement to their taste. In November, 1935, 3000 selected Stakhanovists met together in Moscow for an All-Union Conference, at which Stalin himself spoke. He pointed out that this movement gave promise of a society founded on real Communist principles, with opportunities for all to reach such a material and cultural level as virtually to abolish class distinctions.

There was now an abundance of consumers' goods pouring out of the factories. But the Soviet Government realized that a more definite incentive to intensive work was needed than the dim hope of an ideal Communist state, and actually wage increases corresponding to output were attached to the achievements of Stakhanov and his followers. The gospel of Marx, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," was still modified to, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work". On the authority of official Soviet sources, the second Five-Year Plan, in its main outlines, was virtually completed by March, 1937.

But all was not absolutely well within the Soviet Union. In 1936 there started a series of treason trials which perplexed the outside world because the accused, most of whom were convicted and executed, were men who had been in the spearhead of the old Communist offensive. To outsiders it seemed that, behind the appearance of unity, the Soviet was rent with dissension, and that the opposition to the Government of Stalin was stronger than anyone had believed. Another explanation which the enemies of Stalin in foreign countries suggested was that the ruler of Russia was an egocentric murderer, eager to crush those, even his oldest associates, who did not see eye to eye with him in administrative policy.

The first trial took place in August, 1936, in Moscow. There were fourteen accused, including Zinoviev and Kamenev, two of the Bolshevik Old Guard. They were charged with being the leaders of a terrorist centre closely in touch with the exiled Trotsky, and of planning the assassination of Stalin and his chief colleagues in order to set up a new Government under Zinoviev and Kamenev. For part of its evidence the prosecution referred to the circumstances

of the work, and these by careful planning were so co-ordinated that no effort was wasted and no time lost. The result was that this bricklayer (with his two assistants) could lay some 8000 bricks in six hours as a regular task, an average of under three seconds per brick. "It was a most impressive piece of well-organized high-speed work." The work was accurate enough, but not done naturally with the care that would be demanded in Britain and other countries. By the piece-work system in vogue this particular bricklayer earned a very large wage, larger in fact than that of the manager of the Building Trust which employed him.

connected with the assassination of Kirov, Stalin's right-hand man, in December, 1934, in Leningrad. After that crime Zinoviev and Kamenev had been arrested, exiled, rearrested, and finally imprisoned for eighteen months for "moral responsibility" for Kirov's death. All of the fourteen accused made surprisingly abject confessions of their guilt, and were condemned. On the following day they were executed.

A hunt for "Trotskyists" followed, and a second Moscow trial was held in January, 1937. This time there were seventeen accused, including Radek, a famous Soviet journalist; Piatakov, Assistant Commissar of Heavy Industry; and Sokolnikov, Assistant Commissar of Foreign Affairs, all men of the old Bolshevik circle. The bill of indictment was framed on this occasion on wider lines than before. The accused were said to be members of a terrorist group, pledged to carry out a programme of sabotage as a means of overthrowing Stalin's Government. In addition it was alleged that they had entered into treacherous dealings with German and Japanese agents. Trotsky was apparently at the back of the whole conspiracy, and in touch with the plotters in Russia. The tangled evidence rested on a series of alleged terrorist acts, secret meetings with Trotsky, letters concealed in books sent by Trotsky to Radek, and so on. As in August, all of the accused confessed their guilt. Thirteen of them were condemned to death and shot, the others, including Radek and Sokolnikov, were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

Another purge of the enemies of Stalin's Government was announced in June, 1937. This time the trial, that of eight generals, all holding high and responsible positions, was held in secret. The public was told that the accused admitted that they were guilty of treason and espionage for a foreign power. They were condemned and executed. Among the victims was Marshal Tukhachevsky, second-in-command to Marshal Voroshilov, Chief of the Red Army.

The hunt for "Trotskyists" was still in full cry, and yet another trial—this time of twenty-one men—took place in March, 1938. Among these were men of the greatest eminence in the history of Soviet Russia; for example, Rykov, who had been Premier of the Union, Bukharin, former President of the Communist International, and Yagoda, a former chief of the O.G.P.U. All of them, with one exception, confessed to a variety of crimes, including treason, sabotage, murder, and conspiring with foreign powers. Germany, Japan, Poland, and Britain were the foreign powers mentioned in the

evidence. Eighteen of the accused were sentenced to death, the other three to long terms of imprisonment.

This was the comment of the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* of 18th March, 1938:

"Those who found difficulty in swallowing the trials of Zinoviev and Radek will certainly not have found this trial any easier to accept. . . . In this trial, as in the others, some of the confessions seemed credible, and no doubt there was a substratum of truth; of others one could only feel that the G.P.U. had been spending too much of its time at the cinema. There were the usual damaging mistakes in detail.

"This trial revealed one of the purposes behind all the trials—to prove to the Russian people that anyone who opposes the Government in power is thereby a traitor, a murderer, and a scoundrel. . . . The Russian people is taught not only that it is dangerous to oppose Stalin, to have independent views, to travel abroad and to know foreigners, but that it is treacherous and dishonourable."

After the completion of the first Five-Year Plan a certain element of liberalism crept into the domestic policy of the Soviet Government. In February, 1934, arrears of grain deliveries were remitted, and eleven months later the rationing of grain—it had gone on for five years—came to an end. About this time Stalin became a convert to the idea that children require other mental sustenance than merely political propaganda. New educational plans were published, and the Soviet school became very much like that in other countries, with a *bourgeois* curriculum, lacking, however, religion and dead languages. In 1935 discipline in the school was tightened up, for the free-and-easy Communist methods had not given the results needed, and Stalin fell back on the experience of Western Europe. A system of marks, periodical examinations, reports for parents, even school uniform were introduced. The currency was devalued in 1936, the aim being to give it greater stability. Stalin had apparently decided to conform much of his domestic policy to that of the democracies, and the climax of this process was the publication of a new constitution, largely the work of the dictator himself, which was ratified at an All-Union Congress of Soviets in Moscow on 5th December, 1936.

Among the introductory Articles in the constitution are these:

"The Union of Soviet Republics is a Socialist State of workers and peasants.

"All power in the U.S.S.R. belongs to the toilers of town and country as represented by the Soviets of Toilers' Deputies.



"The economic foundation of the U.S.S.R. is the Socialist system of economy and the Socialist ownership of the implements and means of production, firmly established as a result of the liquidation of the Capitalist system of economy, the abolition of private property in the implements and means of production, and the abolition of exploitation of man by man."<sup>1</sup>

Under the constitution the individual is allowed a certain amount of personal property. The workers' earnings are guaranteed to him, as also are certain limited rights of family property. The peasant, for example, can count as his own his house, the allotment surrounding the house, his implements, three cows, and an unlimited number of pigs and poultry.

To the citizen belong certain inalienable rights: work, holidays with pay, free education, and free medical attendance. The widest measure of personal freedom is granted: freedom of conscience, of speech, of assembly, and of the Press. On the other hand, the citizen has his duties, namely the guardianship of the socialized property of the state, and the defence of the country against attack. At the age of 18 men and women have the right to vote.

The Government of the Union rests in a Supreme Council, consisting of two Chambers, both elected by the free, direct, and secret vote of the people. One represents the Soviet as a unit, the other, the Council of Nationalities, consists of delegates from the various Republics and Autonomous Provinces of the Union. The Supreme Council has the task of electing a *Præsidium* (Permanent Committee), the Commissars of the People, and the higher judges.

According to the constitution the function of the Communist Party is to act as a kind of spearhead in the forward movement towards the Communist goal. By its example the Party will inspire others to follow, and will guide and instruct the masses in the tasks of the Union. Citizens are authorized to vote only for candidates proposed by the Communist Party, or by certain organizations controlled by that body.<sup>2</sup>

The Constitution of the Soviet Union seems to breathe the pure spirit of democracy, but critics have pointed out that, in actual practice, the dictatorship of the Communist Party and of Stalin is not seriously affected. "It may be dismissed as a feat of window-dressing to conciliate liberal opinion in Europe and America," wrote

<sup>1</sup> *Short History of the Russian Revolution* Vol. II: R. Page Arnot.

<sup>2</sup> *Russia under Soviet Rule*: De Basily.

De Basily,<sup>1</sup> and again: "At its head is the Præsidium, exercising the effective direction of its administration of the country; but in fact it is Stalin who still holds and will hold, as in the past, all the controlling levers in his hands. This was fully confirmed by the operation of the constitution."

The success of the Hitler movement in Germany in 1933 had very clear reactions in the U.S.S.R. Before this there were discernible two stages in the Soviet's foreign policy. In the early years of the Bolshevik state, the Government, while busy consolidating its power within the country, carried on at the same time intensive propaganda among foreign peoples. This period ended with the defeat of Trotsky by Stalin in 1929. Then, when the first Five-Year Plan was on foot, the Soviet was too interested in the success of this venture to interfere overmuch with her neighbours. She needed indeed the favour of foreign Governments, since the success of the plan depended on the help which the Soviet could get from abroad. She had to be certain of foreign markets for her grain, timber, and other exports, in order to get the credits with which to import the machinery, etc., essential for the plan. Her connections with the Western European states during this period were almost purely commercial, but when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany Russia was eager to co-operate more actively with the democratic countries, and was prepared to share in the effort to promote peace.

It was at this time also that Russia, like other countries, began to increase her armaments. At the beginning of 1936 the strength of the Red Armies was raised to 1,400,000. The Soviet had two armies, quite independent of each other, one stationed in the east, the other in the west. The east was also a focal point of danger to the Soviet after Japan showed in 1931 that she intended to carry out an intensive expansionist campaign on the mainland. With the formation of the puppet state of Manchukuo,<sup>2</sup> the Soviet found herself close to a hostile neighbour, and with a large frontier to protect. Virtually what was an undeclared frontier war broke out then, with innumerable clashes between Japanese and Russian troops, and continued until the signing of an armistice in September, 1939.

"Watching history being made," it is said, "is like watching somebody sick of a disease, the cause, course, and treatment of which are mostly unknown to us." To diagnose fully and accurately the Russian Revolution and the development of the Bolshevik state was impossible in the 'thirties. One group of writers found

<sup>1</sup> *Russia under Soviet Rule.*    <sup>2</sup> See p. 202.

nothing but good in the Soviet, another group nothing but evil. The reader takes his choice. Here are three opinions:

"The Communist idea has assumed, in spite of persecution, a world-wide significance. . . . The remarkable training in self-government the peoples of the U.S.S.R. are receiving through the local and functional Soviets and the trade unions has steadily strengthened the state since the revolution. . . . Already it is possible to detect the rise of a new human type for whom the problems of life under a Capitalist régime have no meaning. Only Utopians dream of final solutions. In human life problems are solved by reformulating them. It is impossible to deny that such a reformulation has been and is being made in Russia."<sup>1</sup>

"The despotic régime solidly installed in the country represents the ransom the population of the U.S.S.R. has to pay for Soviet accomplishments. If the Bolshevik Government has been able to proceed with its experiments, it has been able to do so only by involving the country in the frightful labyrinth of civil war horrors, bloody repressions of peasant risings, terror and concentration camps, typhus, scurvy, and famine, and all the excesses of forced collectivization; reviving mediæval inquisition methods, trials and the taking of hostages; suppressing by violence the last vestige of individual liberty; and, finally, by turning the population of the U.S.S.R. into human dust."<sup>2</sup>

"The Russians seemed to be practising vivisection in an immense human laboratory."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Russia*: P. H. Box.    <sup>2</sup> *Russia under Soviet Rule*: De Basily.

<sup>3</sup> *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth*: Spender.

CHAPTER XXV  
GREAT BRITAIN, 1932-38

(a) DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

AFTER the general election of October, 1931, a second National Government was formed with Ramsay MacDonald again at the helm, and Neville Chamberlain in place of Snowden at the Exchequer. It had a "doctor's mandate" to do what it could to lessen the effects of the world slump. As one measure it was likely to adopt would be the protection of home industries by tariffs, foreign manufacturers prepared to flood the British market with their goods while trade was still comparatively free. But the Government, anticipating some such move, passed into law immediately after it took office an Abnormal Importations Bill, by which an *ad valorem* duty up to 50 per cent might be imposed on imports. This temporary measure against dumping was replaced in February, 1932, by a regular Import Duties Bill, which "on all imports not specifically exempted" imposed a basic duty of 10 per cent. This could be raised on the recommendation of an Advisory Committee. Viscount Snowden<sup>1</sup> and the Liberals in the Cabinet—Sir Donald Maclean, Sir Herbert Samuel, and Sir Archibald Sinclair—resigned, since they still held firm to the principles of Free Trade. They were persuaded, however, to withdraw their resignations, but, when the Government signed the Ottawa Agreements in the autumn of 1932, thereby adopting without qualification the principles of Protection and Imperial Preference, Snowden and the Liberals felt that this was too much to swallow and gave up office, this time definitely.

One result of the world slump in Britain, as in other countries, was the incentive it gave to the planning of industry. There was no question of *laissez-faire* or of Free Trade after 1932, for most people had recognized by then that Government control was needful if the resources of the country were to be exploited to the utmost advantage. An interesting experiment in planning was that sponsored in

<sup>1</sup> He had been raised to the peerage in November, 1931, and held the office of Lord Privy Seal.

1933-34 by Major Walter Elliot, Minister of Agriculture, who elaborated marketing schemes devised by the Labour Government in 1931. If two-thirds of those engaged in some particular branch of farming agreed to regulate production and to organize the marketing of their produce, the Government undertook to give State backing to such a scheme, and to prevent foreign competition by restricting imports. By the end of 1934 schemes which had received the Government's approval had been drawn up for hops, pigs, bacon, potatoes, and milk. The disadvantage of these Marketing Acts was that they were passed solely for the benefit of the producers, and in the early days of the experiment prices were frequently forced up to the disadvantage of the consumers.

By 1934 Britain had surmounted the difficulties of the world slump, and was indeed better off than any other country in the world. Her economy was again stable, her trade with foreign countries, with many of whom she had concluded reciprocal agreements, was flourishing. This return to comparative prosperity had not been achieved without sacrifices. Social services had been curtailed, the salaries of State servants in all grades and departments had been cut, and the general tax-payer had been forced to dip deeply into his pocket to satisfy the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 1934 there was a Budget surplus of 30 million pounds. As against this, however, Britain's debt to the U.S.A. had been repudiated.

The domestic event which in 1935 roused the greatest enthusiasm among the people was the celebration on 6th May of the twenty-fifth anniversary of King George V's accession to the throne. In the following month the Government was reconstructed, Baldwin succeeding MacDonald as Prime Minister, and Sir John Simon taking Sir Samuel Hoare's place at the Foreign Office. Anthony Eden joined the Cabinet at this time as Minister for League of Nations Affairs. In October the dissolution of Parliament took place, and the leaders of the National Government, justifiably proud of their achievements since 1931, were confident that the electorate would give their administration a new lease of life. One of their slogans was: "A million new houses built, a million more employed."

At the beginning of October Mussolini, defying the League of Nations, launched an attack on Abyssinia. The Duce's act of aggression roused angry feelings in Britain, and during the election campaign foreign policy, in particular the Government's attitude towards Italy, was a dominant issue. While the supporters of the National

Government did not all see eye to eye in the matter of the Italo-Abyssinian War, the Labour Party was even more divided, and could present no united front to the electorate. A few weeks before the election, George Lansbury, the Labour leader, an out-and-out pacifist, resigned, his place being taken by Major Attlee. In the Labour Party there were pacifists who, like Lansbury, refused to countenance war at all as a means of settling international disputes. A larger group were ardent supporters of collective security, and prepared to back the Government even to the issue of war if it took measures, in alliance with other members of the League, against an aggressor. Among this group a certain inconsistency was apparent; they were willing to risk war, but did not hesitate to oppose the National Government's plans for rearmament. This inconsistency was more apparent than real. Labour argued that, if the foreign policy of Britain was based sincerely on the principle of collective security, which meant that the military resources of a number of nations would be combined to resist an aggressor, there was no need for individual rearmament on the colossal scale that the National Government considered necessary. The only reason for such rearmament, in Labour's opinion, was that the Government intended to fall back on the pre-war system of power politics, and was arming so that Britain would in a few years' time be sufficiently strong to command the obedience of her neighbours, or at least to inspire fear among them.

The National Government triumphed at the polls on 14th November. The results were:

National Conservatives ..	387
National Liberals ..	33
National Labour ..	8
Labour .. ..	154
Independent Liberals ..	21

Three weeks later the prestige of the National Government was severely shaken. During the election campaign its spokesmen had professed their adherence to the principle of collective security,<sup>1</sup> and, indeed, before the dissolution of Parliament the Government had acted in accordance with this principle in its relations with Mussolini. The opponents of the Government, however, had accused it of paying but lip-service to the League of Nations, partly perhaps

<sup>1</sup> "We seek peace, a world peace through the League of Nations," said Baldwin in a broadcast speech. (*The Times*, 9th November, 1935.)

to gain the votes of the millions who, in a Peace Ballot held in 1935, pledged their support to the League.<sup>1</sup> There seemed some truth in this accusation when on 9th December the Hoare-Laval Agreement to partition Abyssinia (the aggressor, Italy, being rewarded with a large slice of territory) was made public. So vehement was the outcry against this that the Government immediately repudiated the agreement, and Sir Samuel Hoare, the Foreign Secretary, resigned.<sup>2</sup> His successor was Anthony Eden.

On 20th January, 1936, George V died, and was succeeded by his son, Edward VIII, who reigned less than eleven months. Edward wished to marry an American, Mrs. Ernest Simpson, who had twice previously been married<sup>3</sup>—a marriage which, as Baldwin informed the king, was not one that would receive the approbation of the country or of the Empire. In an interview with the Prime Minister, Edward said: "I am going to marry Mrs. Simpson and I am prepared to go." "Sir, that is most grievous news," was Baldwin's reply. On 10th December, 1936, the king communicated to Parliament his decision to renounce the throne, and next day an Act giving effect to this abdication was passed by both Houses and received the Royal Assent. Similar Acts were passed by all the Dominions. The Duke of York succeeded his brother as George VI. The ex-king, on whom the title of Duke of Windsor<sup>4</sup> was conferred, left England on 12th December, 1936, and did not return until September, 1939. The coronation of George VI and Queen Elizabeth took place on 12th May, 1937. A fortnight later Baldwin resigned his office as Premier, being succeeded by Arthur Neville Chamberlain.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This Peace Ballot was organized by the League of Nations Union, and a large number of people answered the questions on the ballot form. Among these were: Should Britain remain a member of the League of Nations? To this question 11,090,387 answered yes, 355,883 said no, and 112,895 were doubtful.

Another question was: Do you consider that, if a nation insists on attacking another, the other nations should combine to compel it to stop by (a) economic and non-military measures, and (b) if necessary, military measures? For (a) 10,027,608 voted yes, 634,074 said no, and 896,483 were doubtful. To question (b) 6,784,368 answered yes, 2,351,981 said no, and 2,422,816 were doubtful.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 291-2. Sir Samuel Hoare re-entered the Cabinet on 12th June, 1936, as First Lord of the Admiralty.

<sup>3</sup> In 1927 Mrs. Simpson obtained a divorce from her first husband. She married again in 1928, and in November, 1936, a decree nisi was pronounced in the divorce suit she had filed against her second husband, Ernest Simpson.

<sup>4</sup> The Duke of Windsor married Mrs. Simpson in France in June, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> Neville Chamberlain (born 1869), the younger son of Joseph Chamberlain, had a successful business career in Birmingham before entering Parliament in 1918. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1931 to 1937, and was largely responsible for the adoption by Britain of a policy of Protection. It was he who introduced the National Government's tariff measures in 1932.

In 1936-38, while foreign affairs continued to engross the attention of Britain's statesmen, who strove to preserve peace although they wisely prepared for war, there were still domestic problems urgently needing solution. Among these was that of the special areas in South Wales, Cumberland, Durham, Northumberland, and the West of Scotland, where there had been almost continuous economic depression since 1921, and where the percentage of unemployed<sup>1</sup> was very much higher than in other parts of the country. At the beginning of March, 1937, the Government issued a White Paper on the special areas.<sup>2</sup> One of its main proposals was to make contributions towards income tax, rates, and rent of new undertakings established in the areas. It also placed contracts for the building of munition factories in these derelict districts. These factories the White Paper described as a "considerable contribution to the permanent well-being of these areas, since they will afford a measure of continuous employment when the present deficiency programme is made good".

Another problem, that of the danger of the roads as a result of the enormous increase in motor traffic after the Great War, was also one difficult to solve. It was vigorously tackled by Hore-Belisha, Minister of Transport in 1934-37. He imposed an urban speed limit on motor vehicles, introduced beacon crossings ("Belisha beacons") in towns, and by publishing a Highway Code, &c., tried to force pedestrians and others to cultivate a road sense. Despite these precautions 6590 people were killed on the roads in 1937, and 226,355 were injured.<sup>3</sup>

Among the Acts passed by the National Government in 1936-38 were the following: an Education Act (1936)<sup>4</sup> to raise the school leaving age to 15, with exemption for pupils who had the offer of beneficial employment at 14; a Public Order Act (1937) making it illegal for a person to wear a uniform "signifying his association with any political organization";<sup>5</sup> a comprehensive Factory Act,

<sup>1</sup> The number of registered unemployed in the country on 21st June, 1937, was 1,356,598.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 5386, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Transport's figures for 1938 were 6595 killed and 226,854 injured.

<sup>4</sup> This Act was due to come into force in September, 1939, but owing to the outbreak of war then its operation was postponed *sine die*.

<sup>5</sup> The main purpose of this Act was to put an end to the semi-military activities of the Fascists in Britain, who under the leadership of Sir Oswald Mosley seemed determined to provoke conflicts with Communists and other opponents of Fascism. It guarded the citizen's right to express his political opinions publicly without the fear of being assaulted by the storm troopers of either the Fascist or the Communist Party.



one of the most important clauses of which limited the normal working week in a factory for women and young persons to 48 hours, with at most 100 hours' overtime in a year; a reform of the Divorce Laws; a Pensions Act to extend certain State benefits to black-coated workers; and a Coal Act (1938), which transferred mining royalties from private ownership to a Coal Commission. In 1938 the Government gave its official blessing to a movement to grant holidays with pay to weekly wage earners.

Well under way by 1937 was Britain's large-scale rearmament programme, which was started after the publication on 4th March, 1935, of a first White Paper on rearmament. The Government realized that, if the utmost benefit of rearmament was to be gained, it was necessary to organize the resources of the three services—Navy, Army, and Air—in a coherent plan, and to allocate expenditure between them in such proportions as would conduce to the greatest efficiency of the defence system as a whole. With this in mind, it established in March, 1936, a Ministry for the Co-ordination of Defence. Sir Thomas Inskip, who had been Attorney-General since 1932, was appointed, with Cabinet rank, to this new ministry. In the following year Hore-Belisha, who had shown energy and initiative as Transport Minister, was promoted to the War Office. He reorganized the Higher Command, and in 1938 passed measures to democratize the commissioned ranks, and to give any man of sufficient ability and character, even if he had no private means, the opportunity to become and remain an officer. In October, 1938, a complete reorganization of the Territorials was announced, its purpose being to create an up-to-date army capable of reinforcing the Regular Army by units or formations. The following figures show Britain's defence expenditure before and after she started to rearm on a scale commensurate with that of other great powers in Europe:

1913-14	..	..	£ 77 millions.
1929-30	..	..	113 „
1934-35	..	..	114 „
1935-36	..	..	137 „
1936-37	..	..	186 „
1937-38	..	..	283 „
1938-39	..	..	406 „

## (b) IMPERIAL DEVELOPMENTS

## (1) IRELAND

The tariff war<sup>1</sup> which started between Britain and the Irish Free State in 1932 did considerable economic damage to both countries; it was computed that it cost Britain in the first year some 2 million pounds, while the Free State suffered a loss of 17½ millions. A preliminary step towards the restoration of more friendly relations was taken in January, 1935, when J. H. Thomas, Dominions Secretary in the National Government, concluded a trade agreement with de Valera. The Free State agreed to buy the whole of her coal from Britain, while Britain on her side undertook to increase her imports of Irish cattle. But the time was not yet ripe for a complete reconciliation, and neither country lowered or withdrew the penal duties she had imposed on her neighbour.

De Valera seized the opportunity of Edward VIII's abdication in December, 1936, to give the Free State, as far as internal affairs were concerned, a republican form of government. Bills presented in the Dáil provided for the deletion of the king's name from the constitution, and recognized the new king (George VI) in the "province of external affairs only", and as a "symbol of co-operation" of the Dominions in the Commonwealth. A year later, in December, 1937, a new constitution for Eire—this name replaced Irish Free State—came into force. It provided for the election of a President, to hold office for seven years, and of two Houses, the Dáil and a Senate. The title of the head of the Government (de Valera) was changed from President of the Executive Council to Prime Minister.

After some unofficial conversations with Malcolm MacDonald, who was appointed Secretary of the Dominions in November, 1935, de Valera appeared in London in February, 1938, at the head of a delegation to enter into discussions with the British Government for the removal of trade restrictions and for the settlement of outstanding differences between the two countries. In April an Anglo-Eire Pact was signed which put an end to the tariff war; both parties agreed to abolish penal duties and to negotiate a general trade agreement as soon as possible. For a payment of 10 million

<sup>1</sup> The cause of the tariff war was de Valera's refusal to hand over to the British Treasury the land annuities which hitherto had been collected for the benefit of British stockholders who had advanced money to help Irish farmers to purchase their holdings (see p. 128).

pounds, to be handed over to the British Treasury before 30th November, Britain released Eire from her liability to surrender the land annuities. The sovereignty of Eire, moreover, was recognized, for Britain transferred unconditionally to the Eire Government the Admiralty property and rights at Berehaven, and the harbour defences at Berehaven, Queenstown, and Lough Swilly, naval stations which had been reserved for British occupation since the treaty of 1921.

The question of the partition of Ireland was not mentioned in the Anglo-Eire Pact, and in 1938 the realization of de Valera's aim, to unite all Ireland under a Parliament at Dublin, seemed as far off as ever. The Prime Minister of Eire, however, had no intention of surrendering his claim to a united Ireland. After the conclusion of the Anglo-Eire Pact he addressed these words to the members of the Dáil:

"Unfortunately we cannot say to-day that Irish sovereignty is effective over the whole of Ireland, but now this agreement has been reached it will be effective over 26 counties. I am confident that, having got to that point, I believe it is only a matter of time—and I believe a short time—when somebody speaking from this bench will be able to announce to the whole Irish race that at last the British people have been wise and the British Government has been wise and our people in Ireland of all sections have been wise, and that Ireland at last is a completely independent sovereign state."

In a newspaper interview<sup>1</sup> de Valera spoke of the solution which would satisfy him. He proposed an all-Irish Parliament, with representatives from both Northern Ireland and Eire, to deal with certain specified subjects—treaty-making, defence, trade, &c. In Ulster a Provincial Parliament would still function, but no longer would Ulster be represented at Westminster. In another Press interview<sup>2</sup> (with Mr. Hessell Tiltman) on 17th October, 1938, de Valera dealt with the question of Eire's aid to Britain in the event of war. He said:

"Let me say clearly that the chances of such co-operation in the event of a European war are very slight whilst partition remains. Let England, who to assist a settlement of this question has only to convert her friends in the north, help us to get a united Ireland on fair terms, and we shall have something to fight to maintain—a united, free, independent Ireland."

Against this proposal Lord Craigavon, Premier of Northern Ireland, still stood defiantly for "no surrender".

<sup>1</sup> *News Chronicle*, 27th January, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *Evening Standard*.

## (2) INDIA

The recommendations of the Round Table Conference on Indian Affairs, which had had three sessions in 1930-32, were incorporated in a Government of India Bill that received the Royal Assent on 2nd August, 1935. This Act abolished the system of dyarchy, gave immediate self-government to the Provinces, and provided for the ultimate creation of an All-India Federation of Provinces and States. It contained safeguards against a breakdown of the constitution, and against the possible effects of India's inexperience of self-government and the lack of solidarity among the different races and creeds. Burma was separated from India and granted a constitution similar in essentials to that of the autonomous Provinces.

Winston Churchill with a Conservative minority attacked the Bill as a betrayal of the mass of the people of India to the political ambitions of their leaders. Other opponents of the India Act, including the Labour Party, complained that too little had been conceded, and that Britain had surrendered only the shadow of her authority.

The elections under the new Act were held in January-February, 1937. The Indian Congress secured a majority over all the other parties in six out of the eleven Provinces, and was powerfully represented in the others. When the new constitution came into force on 1st April, 1937, Congress delegates in each of the six Assemblies they controlled declined to form a ministry, because the Governors refused to bind themselves not to use in any circumstances their special powers under the Act. In these Provinces a minority Cabinet was formed to carry on the government, and the danger of a complete deadlock was postponed, since the Legislative Assemblies were not to be summoned for six months. By the summer the temper of Congress had changed, and in July, 1937, the Congress majority in each of four Provinces decided to form a Government. This change of heart was largely due to the persuasion of Gandhi, who was convinced by the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow (he succeeded Lord Willingdon in April, 1936), and by the Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, that the British Government would co-operate to the full with the Congress ministers to make the constitution a success. By the end of 1937 Congress members had formed Governments in seven Provinces. On 6th January, 1939, the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* wrote:

"Provincial autonomy has functioned, despite occasional jars and shocks in the Congress-governed Provinces, to general satisfaction. The Congress Party has come to the conclusion, after more than a year's actual experience of office, that the checks and reservations contained in the provincial part of the constitution need not prevent the ministries from making far-reaching attempts to carry out their electoral pledges."

The federation of India was a problem much more difficult to solve, for neither Congress nor the native Princes were enthusiastic about the British Government's proposals. The Princes objected to an Assembly in which they would be associated with the representatives of the democratic Provinces of India. The complaint of Congress was that a Federal Assembly in which the reactionary Princes had power was merely a device of the British authorities to curb the development of self-government among the Indian people. At an informal meeting in June, 1939, a number of Indian Princes decided against the immediate acceptance of federation, which they feared would entail the sacrifice of many of their privileges, and deprive them of the independence, particularly in commercial matters, that they enjoyed within their own frontiers.

### (3) PALESTINE

After the rise of Hitler in Germany in 1933 the persecuted Jews made every effort they could to leave that country, and the number of those who emigrated to Palestine increased considerably. While the number of Jews who entered Palestine in 1932 was 9553, this rose to 30,327 in 1933, 42,359 in 1934, and 61,854 in 1935.<sup>1</sup> This flow of Jewish immigrants increased the tension between Arab and Jew, and in 1936 violent disorders, provoked by the Arab leaders (Italian propaganda was alleged to be partly responsible), broke out all over the country. In November, 1936, a Royal Commission, with Lord Peel as chairman, visited Palestine, and in July, 1937, issued a report<sup>2</sup> recommending the partition of the country, since it seemed impossible to reconcile the political and social differences existing between Arab and Jew. The "surgical operation" proposed by the Peel Commission was:

- (a) Britain to retain control of the waters and shores of Lake Tiberias and the Holy Places "as a sacred trust for civilization", with a corridor from Jerusalem to the sea.

<sup>1</sup> *British Government's Report on Palestine and Trans-Jordan, 1935.*

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 5479, 1937.

- (b) The Jews to be given complete authority over Galilee and a part of the coast.
- (c) The Arabs to rule the rest of Palestine and Transjordan.

The Jews accepted this scheme, though unwillingly, but the Arab Higher Committee rejected it, and encouraged a new campaign of violence among its followers. Britain's reply was to disband the Arab Higher Committee, to depose the Grand Mufti,<sup>1</sup> and to institute military courts for the trial of terrorists.

In 1938 a second Royal Commission under Sir John Woodhead visited Palestine, and the Government, guided by its report,<sup>2</sup> gave up the partition plan which, it was decided, was impracticable. A conference of Jews and Arabs was held in London in February-March, 1939, but it failed to reach any agreement, and on the British Government was then thrown the onus of drawing up some sort of settlement. Meanwhile from October, 1938, to April, 1939, Palestine was the scene of what was virtually an Arab revolt. Civil administration was hampered at every turn, and many casualties occurred in the course of the fighting.

In May, 1939, Britain's proposals for Palestine were made public. The Government abandoned the attempt to give the Jews a national home in Palestine, and stated that its objective was the establishment of an independent Palestine State within ten years, in which Arabs and Jews would share in the government in proportion to their respective populations. The Jews were to remain a minority, since immigration during the next five years was to be restricted to the admission into Palestine of 75,000 Jews, thus bringing the Jewish population to about one-third of the whole. The Jewish Agency for Palestine, commenting on the Government's proposals, stated:

"The Jewish people regard this breach of faith as a surrender to Arab terrorism. It delivers Great Britain's friends into the hands of those who are fighting her.

"It is in the darkest hour of Jewish history that the British Government proposes to deprive the Jews of their last hope and to close their road back to their homeland."

#### (4) EGYPT

The new constitution which King Fuad promulgated in 1930, and which gave himself almost unlimited power, was abrogated in

<sup>1</sup> President of the Moslem Supreme Council in Palestine.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 5854, 1938.

November, 1934, and the period of Palace Government came to an end. The Egyptians, despite the independence they had gained in 1922, continued to blame Britain for all their misfortunes. "Thirteen years after the proclamation of independence many Egyptians were left complaining that British policy had delivered them over to the arbitrary rule of an unpopular sovereign, which they would not have tolerated if they had been in reality a free people."<sup>1</sup> The control which Britain still exercised in the country was irksome to the Nationalists. Efforts to reconcile the sovereignty of Egypt with the vital interests of Britain in the Near and Far East were successful on 26th August, 1936, when an Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance was signed. On the ratification of the treaty the military occupation of Egypt by British troops came to an end, but the Egyptian Government allowed Britain to retain forces in the Suez Canal zone until such time as Egypt was herself strong enough to undertake the protection of this vital highway. In April, 1937, a conference of the interested powers was held at Montreux to discuss the matter of foreign capitulations in Egypt, and on 8th May, 1937, an agreement was signed to put an end to these. The agreement allowed for a transition period of twelve years, during which the nationals of the states concerned would be subject to the jurisdiction of mixed tribunals. At the end of that period the extra-territorial privileges accorded to foreigners would be abolished, and the complete sovereignty of Egypt stand unchallenged.

#### (5) DOMINIONS

During the middle 'thirties the Dominions shared in the general national and international revival of trade that followed the world slump. But both in Canada and Australia the restraints imposed on the Central Government by the constitution hampered economic recovery. The Provinces in Canada and the States in Australia demand the recognition of their constitutional rights, and defy the Federal Government to interfere unduly with their commercial and other interests. In modern conditions the prosperity of a country depends on a nation-wide planning and organizing of its resources, and this, both in Australia and Canada, the jealousy of provincial assemblies opposed. Local interests prevented the carrying out in

<sup>1</sup> *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth*: Spender.

Canada of R. B. Bennett's "New Deal", which included social and other reforms long overdue, and economic and industrial regulations for the benefit of the people as a whole. Bennett's term of office came to an end in October, 1935, when the Conservatives lost the nation's support at the polls, and the Liberals were returned under Mackenzie King. There is a widespread demand for a revision of the Federal Constitution, but the Provinces, in particular Quebec, consider the preservation of their individual rights of the utmost importance.

In Australia, also, a conflict between the Commonwealth Government and the State Legislatures occurred in the middle 'thirties, and proposals to amend the constitution to give the Federal authorities additional powers were defeated in a referendum held in March, 1937. The economic development of Australia is hindered, like that of Canada, by the jealousy of the individual States. In October, 1937, elections were held, and the Government of Joseph A. Lyons, Conservative Prime Minister since 1932, gained a new lease of life.

In New Zealand in 1935 a Labour Government came into power for the first time, and in the years that followed the country became increasingly prosperous. How much this was due to the Government it was impossible to say. The Labour Cabinet passed measures of a mildly Socialist kind. It made legal a basic wage for workers, compulsory arbitration of trade disputes, and a shorter working-day except in special industries; it set up departments to control the export and sale of farm produce, &c.; it nationalized the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, and imposed a ministerial control over Broadcasting. But it made no attempt to abolish Capitalism by direct action, or to undermine the financial stability of the state.

In South Africa the welfare of the natives was a matter that engaged the attention of the Government, and in 1936 two Acts for their benefit were passed. One, the Natives' Representation Act, provided for the election by the Bantus of Cape Province of three Europeans in the Union Parliament and two in the Provincial Council to represent their interests. The Bantu population in all four provinces, moreover, were allowed to elect four Senators to the Union Parliament, and to be represented in a new advisory body, called the Natives' Representative Council. The second Act intended to improve the position of the natives in South Africa was a Natives' Land and Trust Act, which granted the Government powers to buy land to enlarge the area of the native Reserves. In 1935-38 Nazi propaganda in South-West Africa was a matter that caused



some concern till the Union took steps to curb the activities of the Nazi agents.

The Dominions realized that the danger of war which threatened Europe and the world in the 'thirties demanded closer co-operation than before with the mother country, and also some financial sacrifice to build up a powerful defence against an aggressor. By 1937 all of them were spending comparatively large sums in defence plans. Canada voted 35 million dollars for rearmament in 1937, an increase of  $11\frac{1}{2}$  million on the expenditure for defence in 1936, New Zealand enlarged the personnel of both the navy and the air force, while Australia's defence programme cost her  $11\frac{1}{2}$  million pounds in 1937-38, nearly  $4\frac{1}{2}$  millions more than in the previous year. Even South Africa's attitude towards co-operation with Britain changed. In 1935 the Union Minister of Defence stated that the country was in no mood to join in any general scheme of Imperial defence. Two years later he had eaten his words, and was feverishly anxious to link South Africa's defences with those of Britain.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### ITALO-ABYSSINIAN WAR

THE essence of Fascist foreign policy is imperialistic expansion. The Fascist creed glorifies the nationalist spirit, and despises the international outlook of pacifists, supporters of the League of Nations, and other idealists of that type. Mussolini, after his rise to power, made no concealment of his belief that only through war could the greatness of his country and his people be assured. "I absolutely disbelieve in perpetual peace," he said on 1st June, 1934. "It is detrimental and negative to the fundamental virtues of man, which only by means of a struggle reveal themselves in the light of the sun."<sup>1</sup> In August of the same year he assured the Italians: "We are becoming and shall become so increasingly because this is our desire—a military nation. A militaristic nation, I will add, since we are not afraid of words . . . the whole life of the nation, political, economic and spiritual, must be systematically directed towards our military requirements. War has been described as the Court of Appeal between nations."<sup>1</sup>

During the 'twenties, Mussolini behaved more or less as a good European, despite an outburst or two of aggressiveness in the first years of his rule. Indeed, during the last four years or so of the decade he gave his support to the League of Nations, although he emphasized that he had little belief in the power of the League as it was constituted, and that changes were necessary. Mussolini was irritated by the slowness of the League machinery and the difficulty of effecting any radical reform through the Council, since the minor states, suspicious of any move on the part of their powerful neighbours that seemed to threaten their interests, were able to block any proposal (of frontier revision, for example) that alarmed them.

Mussolini was not satisfied with what Italy had gained after the Great War. The "equitable" compensation which had been promised to Italy if Britain and France enlarged their territories in Africa had not been forthcoming. From Britain he had gained

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Our Own Times* by King-Hall.

merely Jubaland, and from France virtually nothing. These Western States still seemed to regard Italy as a third-rate power, and listened to the sound and fury of the Duce himself as though it signified nothing. In the beginning of the third decade Mussolini was convinced that within a year or two the international spirit which had ostensibly guided the policies of European statesmen in the 'twenties was likely to be weakened. The first murmurings of the economic storm that was to break over Europe were to be heard. In the East, Japan was regarding with growing uneasiness the nationalist spirit developing among the Chinese people, and was likely, in the opinion of keen observers, to take action against this Goliath with little regard for her obligations as a member of the League of Nations.

Mussolini's patience was rewarded. When Japan did move against China the futility of the Covenant as a means of restraining an aggressor became only too apparent. Then it seemed to the Duce that the time had come for Italy to start on her destined road of imperial conquest. It did not seem likely that the democracies would interfere with him. A new Germany was arising in the beginning of the decade, a Germany not yet in the power of Hitler, but still a state in which the anti-Versailles spirit was becoming daily more aggressive. It was so necessary for the Western Powers to keep their eyes on Central Europe that Mussolini was sure that any diversion he might cause outside Europe would pass, if not unnoticed, at least unimpeded.

It was necessary for Mussolini, moreover, to undertake some military adventure in order to distract the attention of the Italian people from the grievous economic conditions at home. Italy suffered from the world slump even more than did other countries. In 1927 the lira had been fixed to gold at about 25 per cent above its value in relation to other currencies, a measure which had led to a decline in Italy's exports. Matters became worse in the early 'thirties. Unemployment increased, despite large schemes of public works which were set on foot, the wages of those employed were reduced, and huge Budget deficits had to be faced. By 1934 the adverse trade balance had increased to 2413 million lire, imports amounting to 7644 million lire, and exports to only 5231 million. It was needful to rouse the dispirited populace of Italy in favour of the Fascist régime by some appeal to their national pride. No adventure could be more popular than a colonial war, particularly in Abyssinia, for the disastrous defeat of an Italian force at Adowa in 1896, with the loss of 6000 men in the battle, still roused bitter memories.

It was in the early years of the third decade of the twentieth century that the divergent principles of collective security and pre-war power politics came to a definite conflict. Mussolini argued with some justice that, since the League had failed to stop the aggression of Japan in Chinese territory, it had little right to interfere with Italy if she undertook a colonial war of a purely "domestic" character. The Duce did not believe that, with the Treaty of Versailles, a new world order was automatically brought into existence. He argued that Britain and France, now that they had all the colonial territory they needed, might well wish to preserve the *status quo* in order to enjoy in peace the fruits of their former conquests. But the "have nots" among the nations, and especially Italy, had a right to colonial territory, and, if the satiated powers refused to surrender a part of what they held, it was only just that Italy should be allowed, late in the day, to seize what remained.

Abyssinia, moreover, was of strategic value to Italy. Her two colonies in north-east Africa, Eritrea and Somaliland, were detached territories, and needed the hinterland, i.e. Abyssinia, to bind them together and to give them form and value. Visualizing, also, a time when Italy might claim that the Mediterranean was an Italian sea, the Duce recognized that Abyssinia would be a valuable base from which to strike, if need be, at Britain's power in the Sudan. This would counterbalance to some extent Britain's control of both the eastern and western exits of the Mediterranean. As long as these exits were in enemy hands, Mussolini knew that his Italian sea might well become a "lake" in which his fleet would be completely bottled up. To gain a foothold that would place him in a position to threaten Britain was one motive for the Abyssinian War.<sup>1</sup>

Up to the outbreak of hostilities the relations between Italy and Abyssinia were governed by various agreements. In 1896, after the Italian defeat at Adowa, a peace was signed by which Italy admitted the independence of Abyssinia. In 1906 a tripartite treaty was concluded between Britain, France, and Italy to define each country's sphere of influence in Abyssinia. The signatories bound themselves, first of all, to "co-operate in maintaining the political and territorial *status quo* in Ethiopia", and not to intervene in the internal affairs of the state. But, realizing with customary foresight that the *status quo* might well be disturbed, they agreed in the event of this

<sup>1</sup> There were various reports that Abyssinia was wealthy in minerals, &c., but it did not seem likely that there was much in the way of natural wealth that had not already been tapped. Much of the land is rocky desert, but there are fertile tracts of tableland in the south and west, where tropical vegetation grows.

happening to act together to safeguard the peculiar interests of each in the country. These interests were enumerated:

"The interests of Great Britain and Egypt in the Nile Basin, more especially as regards the regulation of the waters of that river and its tributaries. . . .

"The interests of Italy in Ethiopia as regards Eritrea and Somaliland . . . more especially with reference to the hinterland of her possessions and the territorial connection between them to the west of Addis Ababa.

"The interests of France in Ethiopia as regards the French Protectorate on the Somali Coast, the hinterland of their protectorate and the zone necessary for the construction and working of the railway from Jibuti to Addis Ababa."

A third treaty which defined Italo-Abyssinian relations was signed in 1928. The two states agreed that, for a period of twenty years, any dispute arising between them would be settled by conciliation and arbitration, and not by recourse to arms.

At the instigation of France, with active Italian support, Abyssinia was admitted a member of the League of Nations in 1923. Apparently both France and Italy suspected Britain of having some designs upon Ethiopia, and thought of this method of checking her. The British representatives to the League did not approve of Abyssinia's candidature, but Italy made light of any objections to the step, and assured the Assembly that Abyssinia, "by the remarkable tenacity with which it had been able to preserve its religious faith and national character throughout the ages, had acquired titles of nobility to which due justice must be paid". Both the French and Italian delegates spoke of the efforts being made by Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Abyssinia, to suppress slavery and the slave-trade in the country. This matter was generally considered one of the greatest blots in Abyssinia. When Mussolini had determined to invade the country, Italian propagandists painted a terrible picture of the condition of the tens of thousands of slaves at the mercy of cruel and barbaric masters. Other writers replied that the Government of Abyssinia was doing all it could to stamp out slavery and the slave-traffic. A League Report published in 1935 gave credit to Abyssinia for the progress it had made in this matter, and incidentally pointed out that conditions akin to slavery prevailed in the adjacent Italian colony of Eritrea.<sup>1</sup> Slavery in Abyssinia, moreover, was not like that which had existed, for example, in the Indies and in America. In Ethiopia "domestic slavery means little more

<sup>1</sup> *Inquest on Peace: "Vigilantes"*.

than the keeping of unpaid feudal retainers round the households of chiefs. It is common all over the East, and is something entirely different from the plantation slavery of America, under which men were taken thousands of miles from their homes and made to work under masters of a different colour, race and language.”<sup>1</sup> In 1924 slavery was declared illegal, but this simply threw out of work men who were actually unwilling to leave the masters they had been serving. The Abyssinian Government was not able to crush effectively the slave-trade. Bands of slaves were shipped at times across the Red Sea to Arabia or ‘Iraq, but it was well known that the customary way for transporting these slaves to the sea was through Southern Eritrea, and that the Italian officials winked at what was going on.<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1932 the idea of an attack on Abyssinia was in Mussolini’s mind. In that year General de Bono was sent to Eritrea on a confidential mission, apparently to spy out the land and to discover what were the prospects of a short and successful campaign. The Duce hoped that a mild military “demonstration”, following upon a sustained course of intrigue and bribery among the Rases, the semi-independent feudal chiefs of Abyssinia, would lead to the immediate disintegration of the state, and that Italian troops with little difficulty would then overrun the country. A report, submitted by de Bono to Mussolini in the autumn of 1933, encouraged this belief: “The political conditions in Abyssinia are deplorable; it should not be a difficult task to effect the disintegration of the Empire if we work it well on political lines, and it could be regarded as certain after a military victory on our part.”<sup>2</sup> This was the plan that Mussolini followed. Consuls and other representatives of Italy in Abyssinia sought to buy the allegiance of the Rases and to stir up internal strife. Meanwhile preparations for war were made in Eritrea, and Mussolini waited for an opportune moment to open the campaign.

On 5th December, 1934, a frontier clash between Italian and Ethiopian troops occurred at Wal Wal. This post was recognized, by British authorities at least, to be well within Abyssinian territory, although the greater part of the Italo-Abyssinian frontier was not demarcated. The Italians made preposterous claims for reparation on the Abyssinian Government, and refused to admit, despite the 1928 treaty, that the dispute was one to be settled by arbitration. Mussolini claimed that Abyssinia over a long period of years had

<sup>1</sup> *Mussolini’s Roman Empire*: Garratt.

<sup>2</sup> De Bono’s *Anno XIII*, quoted in *Mussolini’s Roman Empire* by Garratt.

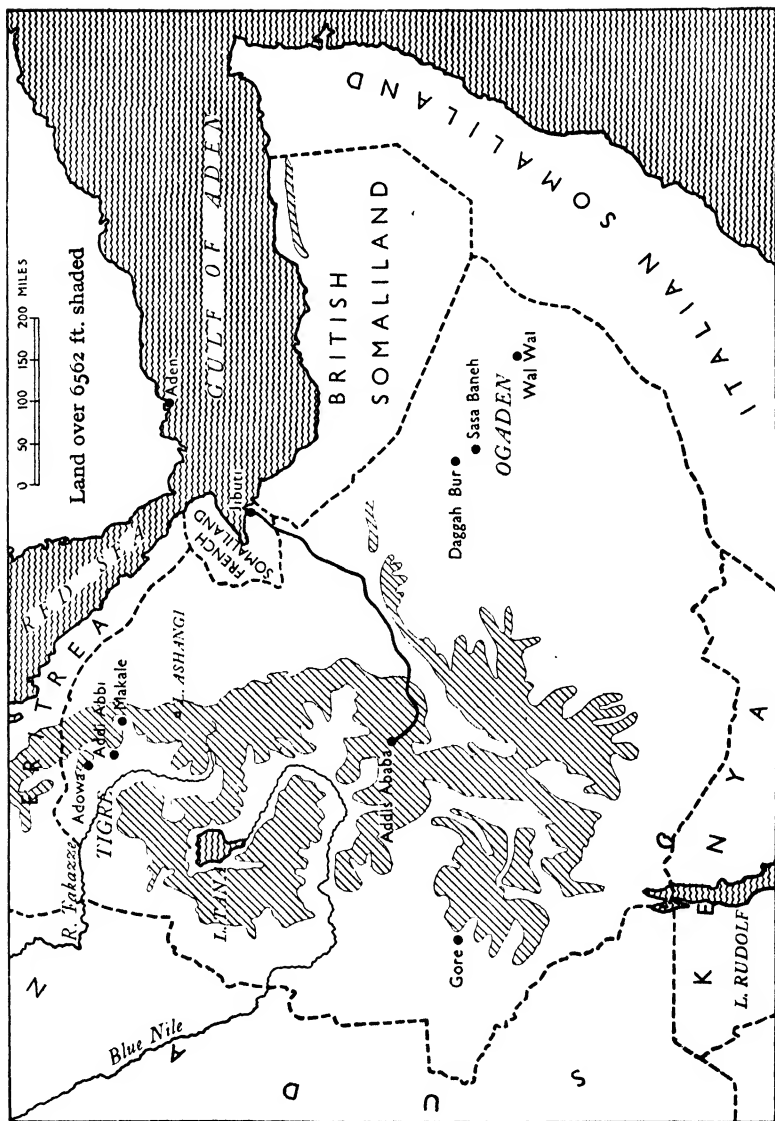
repeatedly broken her promises, and that her tribesmen had never ceased to violate Italian territory. An Italian report enumerated fifty-one raids between 1923 and 1935, ranging from an expedition of 30,000 warriors into Somaliland in 1923 to minor incursions in which some hundreds of Abyssinians took part. During the spring and summer of 1935 Mussolini continued to prepare systematically for war, while the Emperor of Abyssinia made vain efforts to persuade the League of Nations to take action. Eventually in October the Duce was ready, and on the 3rd of that month his troops crossed the frontier.

The Italo-Abyssinian War (1935-36) was one in which a thoroughly mechanized and fully equipped force fought against bodies of comparatively untrained levies, poorly armed and with weapons primitive in comparison with those of their adversaries. The Abyssinians had a miscellaneous collection of rifles, but scanty supplies of ammunition. They had little in the way of artillery or machine-guns, and no anti-aircraft guns. The Italians, on the other hand, had modern weapons of every kind, including tanks and aeroplanes, with which to carry out the campaign. The chief obstacles that faced them were the mountainous country, over which roads had to be built, and the climate, very hot in summer and with tropical rains in winter.

Haile Selassie's regular forces, his Imperial Guard, numbered some 35,000. The only other troops at his disposal were scattered levies brought into the field by various Rases. These might fight for a period and then, when supplies ran short, return to their homes. "It is doubtful if two hundred thousand were ever in the field at one time. Most of the Imperial Guard and about one in ten of the levies had modern rifles, the rest were not as well armed as the Italian non-combatants."<sup>1</sup> In October the Italians had in Africa ready for the campaign 200,000 white troops and 60,000 black, in addition to road-makers and other non-combatants. By the end of the year nearly 60,000 additional Italians had landed in Africa.

On 3rd October, 1935, two Italian forces invaded Abyssinia: one in the north, under the command of General de Bono, crossed the frontier of Tigre, and speedily occupied Adowa and then Makale, a town some fifty miles within Abyssinian territory; the other in the south, under Marshal Graziani, penetrated the Ogaden. This was the position in November. Mussolini probably expected that civil war would now break out (he had expended lavish bribes with

<sup>1</sup> *Mussolini's Roman Empire*: Garratt.





this aim in view), and that his conquest of the country would be accomplished with little bloodshed. This did not happen. Nor did the Rases, with one exception (Ras Gusga<sup>1</sup>), repay the Duce by deserting the Negus. On 28th November Marshal Badoglio replaced de Bono, and the northern campaign was started in earnest. The objective of both the northern and the southern forces was Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. These two Italian armies pushed their way inland towards the capital, with the brunt of the fighting on the Italian side falling on native troops. Aeroplanes played an important part in the Italian advance, and poison gas was used to demoralize the enemy. Against this strange weapon the Abyssinians had no protection. In hand to hand fighting in December, 1935, on the Takazze and in the Battle of Addi Abbi the Abyssinians gave a good account of themselves. But science and Mussolini's mechanized army were too much for them, and by the beginning of March, 1936, Badoglio claimed that northern resistance had entirely collapsed. On 1st April a decisive battle was fought near Lake Ashangi, where the Emperor, with his picked forces, stood in the path of the Italian advance. Despite the bravery of the Abyssinians, they were defeated and scattered, and the road to Addis Ababa was virtually open. Meanwhile, Graziani's army was operating in three columns in the Ogaden. On 29th April Sasa Baneh was captured, and with the fall two days later of Daggah Bur the resistance of the Abyssinians in the south collapsed just as that in the north had done. On 29th April Haile Selassie was in his capital, the remnants of his regular army with him. Deciding then to leave the country, he went by train to Jibuti on 2nd May and was taken by a British cruiser to Palestine. On 5th May Badoglio occupied Addis Ababa, by this time the scene of rioting and looting.

Throughout the war Italian airmen deliberately bombed Red Cross units. That these attacks were intentional was made plain in correspondence<sup>2</sup> that passed between the British and the Italian Governments about the bombing of a British Red Cross unit. The Italians justified the bombing on various grounds: that fire was opened against the aircraft from the neighbourhood of the unit; that the unit was used as cover for Abyssinian combatants, &c. The British ambassador at Rome, on the evidence submitted to him from the British unit in Abyssinia, denied these allegations, and concluded that Italy had no valid legal defence for the action of the Italian Air Force.

<sup>1</sup> He became Italian Governor of Tigre.

<sup>2</sup> Published in April, 1935.

On the same evening as Badoglio entered Addis Ababa, the Duce announced at a demonstration in Rome that the war was finished. He continued: " But it is strictly necessary that I should add that it is our peace, the Roman peace, which is expressed in this simple, irrevocable, definitive proposition, ' Abyssinia is Italian '." <sup>1</sup>

Virtually the war was at an end, although bands of Abyssinian soldiers continued to wage guerrilla warfare in the mountainous districts, and for a time the Negus claimed that a Government which represented his authority was active at Gore. On 10th May Mussolini made public a decision of the Fascist Council to annex the whole of Abyssinia, and to confer the title of Emperor on the King of Italy. Italy instituted a very strict censorship over news from her imperial possession, and expelled foreigners from the country. The purpose of this, it was hinted, was to conceal the ruthless methods of suppression adopted by the conquerors. In the summer and autumn attacks by Abyssinians on Italian outposts were said to be frequent. An announcement came from Rome in December, 1936, that the last of the Rases whose resistance had been formidable had now laid down his arms.

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 6th May, 1936.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE DEATH OF THE LEAGUE

IN January, 1935, Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Abyssinia, addressed an appeal to the League to support him against Italy, since the "defensive preparations" which the Italians were openly making in north-east Africa seemed to have but one purpose—an invasion of the Emperor's territory. But the League was unwilling at this point to interfere in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute. France, in particular, wished to avoid offending Italy. Laval, the French Foreign Minister, had just signed a comprehensive Franco-Italian Pact, which settled outstanding differences between the two countries. In the course of the diplomatic talks between Mussolini and Laval one private conversation took place, about the exact tenor of which there was later some difference of opinion. Mussolini asserted that Laval made it plain that he could go ahead in Abyssinia without France's interference; this Laval denied. It may be that the Duce concealed his real aim in vague allusions and veiled hints. Yet, when the Abyssinian trouble was brewing, France, even at the cost of offending her old ally, Britain, was loath to permit the activities of her new friend to become the subject of League discussion or action.

Haile Selassie's first appeal to the League brought no reply; France insisted that the disputants should settle their quarrel amicably without interference. Every month or so until the summer the Negus continued to send appeals to the League, but by various means these were kept off the agenda, and the Italo-Abyssinian dispute remained undiscussed. Meanwhile Mussolini's war preparations in Eritrea went on rapidly and smoothly. In April, 1935, British, French, and Italian statesmen met at Stresa to condemn Germany's repudiation of the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty. At this conference no reference was made to Abyssinia, although in the British delegation were men with expert knowledge of north-east Africa. Later Mussolini insisted that he had been quite prepared at Stresa to

discuss the Italo-Abyssinian dispute,<sup>1</sup> but apparently he waited for Britain to make the opening, and Britain's representatives, Sir John Simon and Ramsay MacDonald, were interested at the moment purely in European affairs. Intent on securing Mussolini's adherence to the Stresa Front against Germany, "Sir John Simon obviously felt that the rights and integrity of a 'black' country should not be allowed to confuse the serious consideration of European politics".<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, between January and June, 1935, although the League was not allowed to discuss the Abyssinian dispute, the British Government was not idle. On 29th January, 1935, Italy, through her ambassador in London, invited the British Government "to consider specific agreements for a harmonious development of the Italian and British interests in Ethiopia".<sup>1</sup> Mussolini's purpose was to revive the pre-war practice adopted by the Great Powers of allocating to each other round the council-table spheres of influence in a colonial territory. He hoped to conclude an agreement with Britain on the lines of the Franco-British *Entente* of 1906 or the Anglo-Russian *Entente* of 1908. In May, 1935, a report was drawn up by Sir John Maffey, Permanent Under-Secretary of the Colonial Office, embodying the opinion of the British Government about the Italo-Abyssinian matter. The report insisted that Italy would certainly do her utmost to secure control of Abyssinia, and then discussed what measures Britain should take to safeguard her interests. Among these were: "Should Abyssinia disappear as an independent state the British Government should try to obtain control over the Lake (Tana) and over a corridor joining it to the Sudan"; and "the opportunity should be seized if possible to rectify the boundaries of British Somaliland, Kenya, and the Sudan so as to incorporate those adjoining localities which have bonds of economic and ethnical affinity". The main conclusion of the report, that "it would be a matter of indifference whether Abyssinia remained independent or was absorbed by Italy," strengthened the claim Britain made later that when she took action against Italy her motives were quite disinterested.

In June, 1935, Britain proposed a solution of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute. She was prepared to grant a strip of British Somaliland to Abyssinia stretching to the port of Zeila—a corridor for camels—if Abyssinia would concede territory to Italy.<sup>3</sup> Mussolini, who was determined to have all and not merely a part of the prize, paid no

<sup>1</sup> *Morning Post*, 17th September, 1935. <sup>2</sup> *Mussolini's Roman Empire*: Garratt.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 303, 5th Series, p. 2006.

attention to this offer. In August Britain and France entered into fresh negotiations, but again Mussolini proved intractable. Having failed to solve this colonial problem on pre-war lines, Britain now fell back on the League, and on the obligations which the members had assumed under the Covenant. It has been suggested that the National Government supported a League policy at this stage, not because it believed sincerely in the virtue of collective security, but because Mussolini was proving so intransigent that, to protect her own imperial interests in Africa, Britain felt she would do well to work with the force of the League behind her. In support of this view is the fact that between January and August Britain gave no sign that she wished the League to interfere in the matter. Moreover, the National Government offered no encouragement to Abyssinia. The export of arms was forbidden both to Abyssinia and Italy (the Duce was already well provided), and pressure was brought to bear on the Abyssinian minister in London to prevent the formation of a foreign legion for service in Abyssinia. An Order in Council, drawn up towards the end of 1934, made it illegal for British nationals to volunteer for service with the Ethiopian forces.

Public opinion in favour of action against Italy was roused by the autumn. In September the Italo-Abyssinian dispute finally came before the Council of the League. Baron Aloisi, the Italian delegate, delivered a speech in which he alleged that Abyssinia, where anarchy and barbarism existed, had, by acts of provocation and aggression of every kind against Italy, surrendered her right to be treated as a League member on an equality with Italy. The Abyssinian representative replied with spirit, and appealed to the Council to adopt measures to remove from Ethiopia the threat of attack that lay in the military preparations of Italy.

Still another attempt was made to find some basis for conciliation. A Committee of Five was appointed, which drew up a plan, somewhat on the lines of the previous proposals of Britain and France, to give Italy, through advisers, economic and administrative control of Ethiopia. Mussolini was still adamant, and reiterated that the dispute was not one that could be settled by the League. Then on 11th September Sir Samuel Hoare, Britain's Foreign Minister, made a famous speech that, for a time at least, restored to Britain her leadership in European politics. Britain undertook, for the first time, to fulfil her obligations under the Covenant against an aggressor. Sir Samuel Hoare said that the British Government "will be second to none in their intention to fulfil, within the measure

of their capacity, the obligations which the Covenant lays upon them". And later: "In conformity with its precise and explicit obligations the League stands, and my country stands with it, for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression." In the Council Chamber the representatives of other countries expressed their willingness to support Britain.

But it was too late to frighten Italy now by this threat of collective action against her. She continued with her preparations, waiting merely for the conclusion of the wet season before starting operations in Abyssinia. On 2nd October Mussolini ordered a "National Mobilization", and on the following day Italian troops crossed the Abyssinian frontier and the war had started. On 7th October the League Council unanimously found that Italy had "resorted to war in disregard of its covenants under Article 12". Automatically then Article 16—that dealing with the sanctions to be employed against an aggressor—came into force. A Co-ordinating Committee was set up to examine what sanctions might be imposed on Italy. It approved of an arms embargo, the prohibition of all loans and credits, an embargo on Italian imports, and a ban on the export to Italy of materials necessary for war. On 18th November these sanctions came into force. The international complications which now threatened Italy were felt by the Italian people to be a betrayal on the part of Britain and France, since in the spring and summer "Italy had clearly shown her intentions and apparently had received the tacit consent of the interested powers".<sup>1</sup>

Britain's decision to support sanctions was based on various considerations. The Peace Ballot of 1935 showed that a large number of the electorate were keen supporters of the League of Nations. Of 11½ million who recorded their opinion, 10 million approved of economic and non-military sanctions being applied against an aggressor. This unofficial expression of public opinion had probably some influence on the British Government. The Dominions, moreover, looked with suspicion on Mussolini's adventure, and favoured the imposition of sanctions. General Smuts stated that "a great conflict in Africa on the borders of British territory must have serious repercussions in British territories in Africa".<sup>2</sup> While an Italian victory might provoke sympathetic risings among other black peoples, an Abyssinian victory, on the other hand, was not a prospect that Britain could view with equanimity, for it might

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 11th October, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 13th August, 1935.

conduce to the growth of a "black nationalism" in the continent that would endanger the position of all colonial powers. This partly explained the British Government's anxiety to arrange matters with Mussolini, even on the pre-war diplomatic basis, in order to prevent any outbreak of hostilities. The Duce's intransigence made this impossible. The Conservatives in Britain were somewhat apprehensive of this untried weapon of sanctions, but a large body of Liberal and anti-Fascist opinion was in favour of carrying out the policy to the extreme limit. Labour, as a whole, approved of sanctions, although George Lansbury, the leader of the Party, was himself an out-and-out pacifist, and believed that Abyssinia ought simply to submit without attempting to protect herself.

Two vital sanctions which, had they been imposed early, would perhaps have brought Mussolini to heel, were the closing of the Suez Canal and an embargo on oil. There was never any serious official intention of interfering with the free passage of Italian troops and armaments through the Canal to Eritrea. Legally the powers had no right, even if they had the will, to close the Suez Canal. In the convention which Ferdinand de Lesseps drafted were inserted the following points:

"The Suez Maritime Canal shall always be free and open in time of war as in time of peace to all war vessels without flag discriminations.

"Consequently, the High Contracting Parties agree in no way to prevent the free use of the Canal in time of war as in time of peace.

"The Canal shall never be used for the exercise of the right of blockade."<sup>1</sup>

There was no legal obstacle to the imposition of an oil embargo if the members of the League cared to risk it. Had it been imposed at the beginning of the war Mussolini's difficulties would have been increased a thousandfold, and probably the Abyssinian campaign would have been speedily terminated. But when hostilities had started in earnest British and French statesmen feared that, if an oil embargo was imposed, Mussolini would in his anger turn against his League enemies and plunge Europe into a general war. The Duce was prepared to accept mild sanctions (in fact they were useful in rousing Italian opinion to his support), but he made it plain that he would regard the application of an oil sanction as an "unfriendly act".

While the question of an oil embargo was still under discussion,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Mediterranean Crisis* by Greenwall.

a Hoare-Laval Peace Plan became known to the public on 9th December. The proposal was to give Italy a large tract of Abyssinia outright and to confer on her economic control over another extensive area in return for the stopping of hostilities. The Negus would still have a territory he could claim as his own, at least for a time, and to compensate him for the concessions to Italy a strip of land to the Red Sea was to be handed over to him. "According to the standards of the old diplomacy, the Hoare-Laval settlement would certainly have ranked as a creditable achievement on the part of the British and French ministers."<sup>1</sup> But at the end of 1935 the people of Britain and France were not in a mood to reward an aggressor blatantly at the expense of his victim. The details of the plan leaked out prematurely and caused such an outburst of indignation that both the British and French Governments had to throw it overboard immediately.

Sir Samuel Hoare resigned from the Foreign Office, and on 19th December justified the plan in a speech which he delivered in the Commons. He said that the British Government was assured that, while Mussolini did not regard economic sanctions as an act of war, the imposition of an oil embargo would be considered by Italy as an act involving war against her. With this threat of a general war hanging over Europe it was essential for Britain and France to try to bring hostilities in Abyssinia to a close. Hence the peace plan. Hoare emphasized that, while Britain had taken some military precautions against attack—the reinforcing of the Mediterranean Fleet, for example—she had not been supported by similar action on the part of other members of the League. He said in the course of his speech:

"I have been terrified with the thought that we might lead Abyssinia on to think that the League could do more than it can do, that in the end we should find a terrible moment of disillusionment in which it might be that Abyssinia would be destroyed altogether as an independent state. . . .

"We alone have taken these military precautions. . . . Not a ship, not a machine, not a man has been moved by any other member state.

"If every member state will by action prove that it is determined to take its full part in resistance to an aggressive act, if an aggressive act is made, then it will be possible to have the kind of peace that we all of us desire."<sup>2</sup>

While Sir Samuel Hoare defended his share in the peace plan skilfully and with conviction, the explanation which Baldwin gave

<sup>1</sup> *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth: Spender.*

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 307, 5th series, pp. 2014-2015.



was unconvincing. He confessed that he did not feel "complete satisfaction" with his part in the affair.<sup>1</sup> During the Paris conversations between Hoare and Laval there was apparently an "absence of liaison", and the first intimation the Prime Minister had of the Paris plan was in a letter from the Foreign Minister on 8th December, urging the Cabinet to endorse the agreement already drawn up. Immediately afterwards the details of the plan leaked out, and Baldwin, although he did not like the proposals, felt that he had to act without delay and that it was essential to support the Foreign Minister. He admitted an "error of judgment" in not recalling Hoare immediately for consultation. Then he said: "These proposals are now absolutely and completely dead, and this Government will make no attempt to resurrect them."<sup>1</sup> A question which was naturally asked immediately was why the Foreign Minister had been thrown to the wolves, while the Prime Minister continued in office.

The debate about an oil embargo continued. France was definitely against it. To be effective it required the co-operation of the U.S.A., but after the publication of the Hoare-Laval Plan American opinion became suspicious of the motives underlying the policy of Britain and France, and the co-operation of the U.S.A. in action against Italy became less likely than before. On 1st March, 1936, Anthony Eden, Hoare's successor at the Foreign Office, declared that Britain was prepared to support an oil embargo if other members of the League would join in the application of it.<sup>2</sup> A few days after this announcement the Germans occupied the demilitarized section of the Rhineland, and European diplomats were so horrified by this violation of a treaty nearer home that they no longer discussed the question of banning oil, but quietly shelved the proposal.

✓ The sanctions which the League imposed did not prevent Mussolini from finishing the Abyssinian War to his own satisfaction. His success virtually killed the League, and before the eyes of all the world the bubble of collective security was burst. How far responsibility for the failure of the League rests on the shoulders of the British and French Governments is a matter of dispute. While Britain and France were prepared to take the lead, the success of a League policy depended entirely on the willingness of all the members to share the same dangers and the same sacrifices. A fair measure of responsibility rests on France. In a speech which Laval delivered on 25th June, 1939, he referred to the policy of sanctions

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 307, 5th Series, pp. 2030-2033.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 2nd March, 1936.

adopted against Italy in 1935-36. "Sanctions," he said, "were imposed in order not to break with Great Britain and the League of Nations, and they were applied in moderation in order not to break with Italy and to prevent war."<sup>1</sup> The French were realists. Having failed repeatedly to persuade Britain to act with them against Germany, they were determined to keep their army intact while a re-armed Germany stood threateningly on the Rhine.

In the late spring of 1936 sanctions continued to be imposed on Italy, but by this time most of the League powers were eager to rid themselves of this incubus. On 10th June Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Baldwin's Government, referred in an after-dinner speech to the continuance of sanctions as the "very midsummer of madness". This reflected Conservative opinion in the country, and on 18th June Anthony Eden officially announced the Government's intention to end sanctions against Italy. His justification was that sanctions were now useless, and that only military action would be effective in helping Abyssinia. Four days later Sir John Simon, in reply to a Labour motion of censure on the Government's surrender, excused the failure of the League powers to impose an oil embargo by laying the blame on the U.S.A., whose co-operation would have been necessary if this sanction was to be effective.<sup>2</sup> To this the reply was made that American opinion was favourable to an oil embargo until the publication of the Hoare-Laval Peace Plan. This convinced America that Britain's support of the League was insincere. The League Council decided that sanctions should come to an end on 15th July. The main desire of European countries was now to forget about the Abyssinian War. "The British Foreign Office, controlling the Sudan, the only practical way into Gore and Western Ethiopia, deliberately obstructed any attempt to keep alive resistance to an Italy which had not yet made even a formal entry into the western provinces. The passage of arms and ammunition was completely forbidden, on the grounds that it might encourage civil war between the tribes, a ridiculous and mendacious 'gloss' on the report of the British Consul. Ethiopians and Europeans were forbidden to go to the parts of Ethiopia which were still free."<sup>3</sup>

Even after the lifting of sanctions, relations between Britain and Italy remained strained. The British Government refused to recognize the conquest of Abyssinia and the new Empire which Italy

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Sunday Times*, 20th August, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 313, Series 5, p. 1622.    <sup>3</sup> *Mussolini's Roman Empire*: Garratt.

had built in East Africa. Italy retaliated by encouraging agitation and rioting against British authority in Palestine, by anti-British propaganda from the wireless station of Bari, &c. Moreover, the Italian garrison in Libya was largely increased; this was a threat to Egypt and the Suez Canal. Italy's intervention in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) seemed also an act of veiled hostility against Britain.

Baldwin's Government was anxious to restore more friendly relations with Italy, and made overtures to that effect. On 2nd January, 1937, an Anglo-Italian Declaration was signed, by which both states agreed to maintain the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, and to respect each other's rights in these waters, which were recognized as being vital to both. This "Gentlemen's Agreement" did not ease matters very much, and Neville Chamberlain, who succeeded Baldwin as Premier in May, 1937, made more determined efforts than before to effect a reconciliation with the Duce. His desire to negotiate with Italy led to the resignation in February, 1938, of his Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, who felt that, until Italy gave some guarantee of her good faith, an agreement with her was inadvisable.<sup>1</sup> Eden's place at the Foreign Office was taken by Lord Halifax.

Chamberlain continued to work for a settlement with Italy, and eventually, on 16th April, 1938, an Anglo-Italian Pact was signed. The pact was made conditional on the withdrawal of Italian forces from Spain. The treaty guaranteed the territorial *status quo* in the Mediterranean, and reaffirmed the free use at all times of the Suez Canal. Britain recognized Italy's conquest of Abyssinia, and Italy promised that the waters of Lake Tana in Abyssinia, upon which the prosperity of the Sudan and Lower Egypt depends, would not be diverted. Both signatories abjured the use of propaganda, &c., to injure each other. In November of the same year the agreement was brought into effect.

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 332, 5th Series, p. 49.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### SPANISH REPUBLIC

**I**MMEDIATELY after the Spanish Republic was instituted in April, 1931, Alcalá Zamora, the Prime Minister, wrote an article in which he said:

“The forces of law and order remain within barracks, or, if ordered out, fraternize with the people. . . . There is no need to guard any bank, church or convent, for they are threatened neither by greed nor by sectarian passion. Shops are left open without the slightest anxiety or danger. . . . Even jewellers take no particular precautions. Women, and indeed children, go freely about the streets. . . . On the fifth day of republican rule, a civic procession of over one hundred thousand people made its way through Madrid without the least disorder. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

But the Prime Minister wrote too optimistically. Within a short time the forces of law and order had to leave the barracks and uphold the Government's authority in the streets. In May, after the publication of a provocative pastoral letter of Dr. Pedro Segura, Cardinal-Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of all Spain, anti-monarchist riots broke out in Madrid and spread to other parts of the country. The mob attacked and set fire to churches and church buildings. But the Government's forces acted promptly, and order was restored in five days.

After the general election in June,<sup>2</sup> which passed off quietly, the Government had to deal with sporadic outbursts of popular feeling and with revolutionary strikes organized by the Syndicalist Confederation. On the last day of 1931 occurred the first of what proved to be a series of village tragedies. This was a brutal attack on the City Guard in Castilblanco, a tiny hamlet with a population of some nine hundred, by a band of villagers to whom permission to hold a political meeting had been refused. Four of the guards were killed. But the leaders of the Republic were not weaklings;

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Spanish Tragedy, 1930-36* by E. Allison Peers.

<sup>2</sup> The Government candidates averaged 120,000 votes as against 30,000 polled by candidates next in order (Peers).

they suppressed as far as they could this anarchist element among their Left supporters. Hundreds of Communist rebels were deported to Spanish Guinea without the formality of a trial.

By the summer of 1931, when the Republic was apparently firmly established, with, moreover, an Emergency Law on the statute-book giving the Government almost dictatorial powers, dissension arose between the Socialists and the Republicans, particularly in connection with the proposed changes in the Church. Alcalá Zamora, the Prime Minister, and Maura, Minister of the Interior, were devout Catholics and opposed to any drastic Church reforms. The Socialists, on the other hand, were eager to crush the political and social influence of the Church. Eventually the Socialists gained at least a partial victory. They forced the resignation of Zamora (he became the first President of the Republic, and took office on 11th December, 1931) and Maura, and Manuel Azaña, who had been Minister of War, formed a new administration. Azaña's policy followed the lines of a compromise. Secular education, free and compulsory, was instituted, but to the Church was still guaranteed the right, under State control, to continue doctrinal teaching in its own buildings. Religious orders were not expelled, and most of them carried on as before, except the Society of Jesus, which, by a decree issued on 23rd January, 1932, was dissolved. Property belonging to it, to the value of six million pounds, passed to the State. But the Jesuits were alleged to control <sup>1</sup> large investments in individual and public undertakings, and the greater part of that wealth escaped confiscation. It was enacted also that the State subsidy to the Church should end in two years. Many writers credited the Church in Spain with "vast resources, derived from every variety of interest—such as house property, banking, money-lending, industry, mining, transport, chain-stores, films, theatres, and even cabarets".<sup>2</sup> Professor Peers denied that there was any foundation for these extravagant claims, and also called in question the oft-repeated statement that the Church in Spain was the greatest or one of the greatest landowners in the country. "The truth is that, at the present time, with occasional exceptions in the shape of property newly acquired, neither regulars nor seculars have any land beyond that on which their buildings stand, fields and gardens,

<sup>1</sup> "A trustee is not regarded as rich merely because he administers the estate of a millionaire. The Spanish ecclesiastics were the underpaid trustees of national charity." (*Spanish Rehearsal*: Alfred Lunn.)

<sup>2</sup> *Searchlight on Spain*: Duchess of Atholl.

the products of which are used by monks for their own sustenance, and so on.”<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the “ Law of Confessions and Congregations ”, which the Republic passed in June, 1933, was to restrict the freedom of the religious orders. No order was permitted to engage in political activity of any kind, or in commerce or industry, or in agricultural labour apart from what was necessary for its own subsistence. While the orders might continue to instruct their own members, they were forbidden to undertake any other educational work and to maintain private schools of their own. It was enacted that all teaching by members of religious orders had to come to an end by 31st December, 1933.<sup>2</sup>

Azaña's Government fell in September, 1933, and under its successor the decree to close convent schools remained inoperative; they were allowed to continue indefinitely. This, in Professor Peers's opinion, was fortunate; for, had the Republican proposal taken effect, nearly 350,000 children would have been turned out of the schools controlled by the religious orders without much hope of receiving instruction elsewhere. The result of the legislation in Madrid, for example, would have been “ to throw almost as many children upon the streets as were there under the Monarchy, to undo the work of the Republic, and to postpone for at least a further two years the absorption of all the children in the city ”.<sup>1</sup> The Republic in 1931 had boldly tackled the difficult educational task that faced it, namely to set a country, in which more than 40 per cent of the people could neither read nor write, on the path of literacy. By the end of 1932 Fernando de los Ríos, Minister of Education, claimed that 10,000 new elementary schools had been opened, and that the number of secondary school pupils had increased in three years from 20,000 to 70,000.

The Republic solved the problem of the army juntas and the privileged military caste by pensioning officers with a generous retiring allowance, and ridding itself in this way of 10,000 out of 20,000 of them. The army officer became subject to the same civil law as the ordinary citizen.

To solve Spain's agrarian problem Azaña's ministry made, in the words of Professor Peers, a “ courageous and able attempt at land settlement ”. In the north, where holdings were small, the experiment of combining these in “ communities ” was made, to

<sup>1</sup> *Spain, the Churches and the Orders*: Peers.

<sup>2</sup> *The Spanish Tragedy*: Peers.

be worked, if the peasants so wished, collectively. In the south, where there were large estates, principally in Estremadura and Andalusia, legislation provided for the expropriation of landowners, and the settlement of peasants on the land. This caused discontent both among the *grandees*, to whom the compensation offered by the Republic seemed insufficient, and among the landless peasants, who considered that the law did not permit nearly as rapid a settlement on the land as was necessary. Some 12,000 families had received holdings by September, 1933.<sup>1</sup> According to Koestler only 1009 of the land was divided among the peasants in 1931-33.<sup>2</sup> An eight-hour day was introduced for farm workers, and wages rose in Andalusia and Estremadura from 3 to 8 pesetas for a day's work.<sup>2</sup>

In other reforms the Republican Government showed its liberal outlook. The Catalan demand for independence was satisfied, at least to a great extent, by the grant of autonomy. In economic matters the Government strove for efficiency in industry, nationalized the railways, and brought the Bank of Spain under its control. Its Socialist bias was reflected in measures taken to help the workers; the institution, for example, of a system of public relief and of old-age pensions.

"In spite of its compromises," wrote Hampden Jackson, "the Republic did more for Spain in eighteen months than the monarchy in half a century."<sup>3</sup> Yet it was precisely because it did compromise that it failed. Its reforms were sufficiently drastic to anger and alarm the Church and the *grandees*, without, however, satisfying the extreme Socialist element in the country. It was attacked therefore by enemies both of the Right and the Left. In January, 1932, there were serious risings among the Anarchist and Syndicalist groups in Catalonia, which were crushed only after considerable bloodshed. On the political Right, in August, 1932, when the Government Bill for the expropriation of landowners had become law, General Sanjurjo, Director-General of the Civil Guard, revolted in Seville and proclaimed himself Captain-General of Andalusia. The rising was not general, and was crushed in a day, Sanjurjo himself being arrested. Sentenced to death, he was later reprieved, and after a short term in prison went to Germany. Despite these hostile forces working against the Government, Azaña felt strong enough to repeal in August, 1933, the Emergency Law which had

<sup>1</sup> *Searchlight on Spain*: Duchess of Atholl.

<sup>2</sup> *Spanish Testament*.

<sup>3</sup> *The Post-War World*.

been passed when the Republic was instituted to give the Government dictatorial powers to deal with terrorists, &c.

It was then that the Right reaction against Azaña's Government became strong and united. Its chief leader was Gil Robles, a young Catholic deputy, who, immediately after the constitution of the Republic became law, united his co-religionists against the Government in an organization called *Acción Católica* (Catholic Action). In this he had the help of Angel Herrera Orio, the Jesuit editor of *El Debate*, the chief Catholic paper in Spain. Gil Robles was the leader of the strongest coalition in the country, a Confederation of Right Parties, called the C.E.D.A.<sup>1</sup> The *Renovación Española*, a monarchist party, and the *Falange Española* (Falangist or Fascist Party), at whose head was José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the former dictator, were groups also working to overthrow the Republican Government. Robles succeeded in uniting these reactionary leagues in an *Acción Popular*.

While Gil Robles was the keenest organizer of the definitely anti-Republican parties, the leader of the Right opposition in the Cortes was Alejandro Lerroux, who, after being ousted from the office of Foreign Minister which he had held in the Provisional Republican Government (April-June, 1931), did what he could to impede the work of Azaña's ministry. In the summer of 1933 the breach between the Right and Left wings of Azaña's party continued to grow wider; and with regard to the key problems, the Church and the land, the Prime Minister failed to effect a compromise that was acceptable to the bulk of his supporters. Accordingly, on 13th September, 1933, he resigned. Elections for a new Cortes were held on 19th November and 3rd December, and Azaña's failure to satisfy both moderates and extremists—a task beyond even his subtle statesmanship—showed itself in the results of the polls. The Socialist seats were reduced from 114 to 58. The Right registered a victory, and, since the largest single party in the Cortes was that of Lerroux, this Radical leader became the head of a new Government. Gil Robles, although he did not accept office under Lerroux, promised his conditional support to the ministry. The reactionary group in the Cortes gained a valuable ally in Calvo Sotelo. This deputy, who had been accused of the misuse of public funds while serving as Finance Minister under Primo de Rivera, had been out of Spain since the fall of the dictator, but Lerroux's Government passed an Amnesty Act which allowed him to return and take his seat in the Cortes.

<sup>1</sup> *Confederación Española de Derechos Autónomos*.



Lerroux's aim was not to overthrow the Republic; he wished merely to keep it safely conservative, and to prevent the passing into law of Socialist measures. Gil Robles and his adherents, on the other hand, planned to destroy Parliamentary government altogether, and to institute a Fascist dictatorship. In October, 1933, Robles declared to a large assembly at Madrid that "we must move towards a new state. What matter if it means shedding blood? We need an integral power; that is what we are seeking. In order to realize that ideal we will not detain ourselves in archaic forms. Democracy is for us not an end, but a means to go on to the conquest of a new state. When the moment comes either Parliament will submit or we shall make it disappear."<sup>1</sup> There was no dubiety about what he intended.

The Lerroux Government proceeded to weaken the Socialist and anti-Capitalist measures of the previous administration. State subsidies to the Church were to be continued, no more Church schools were to be closed, and the Azaña Agrarian Law was revised. Against this offensive the Socialist deputies could, constitutionally, make no resistance. Throughout the country, where there was serious economic distress, with high food prices and 1½ million unemployed, strikes broke out, but these were ruthlessly suppressed. From the beginning of 1934 the threat of civil war overhung the Spanish horizon. To withstand the reactionary forces which were in the ascendant, the leaders of the workers' organizations realized that a measure of unity was essential, and brought this about to some extent in a body known as the Workers' Alliance. Meanwhile the Lerroux-Robles coalition was finding it difficult to pursue a course of action acceptable to all its supporters. There were extremists, anxious to crush completely the republican spirit in the country; others, more moderate in opinion, argued that retrogression might go too far. It was because of its failure to persuade the President of the Republic to sign a Bill pardoning 9000 Royalist and other enemies of the constitution, and because there was serious opposition in the Cortes to a proposal to restore all their lands to the grandees that on 25th April, 1934, the Lerroux ministry resigned. A new Government, with Samper at its head, came into power, but it was as antagonistic to the parties of the Left as its predecessor had been. By the autumn revolution was in the air, and when Lerroux replaced Samper on 1st October the struggle between the Right and the Left seemed nearing a crisis. It came three days later when Alcalá Zamora, the President, invited three of Robles's supporters to join the Government. They, like

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Searchlight on Spain* by the Duchess of Atholl.

the members of other of the Right parties in the Cortes, had not taken an oath of allegiance to the constitution. The way was being cleared for the introduction of some sort of Fascist rule, and the workers in Spain determined to resist.

On 5th October a general strike was called as a protest against what the Catalan leader, Companys, called "monarchizing and Fascist forces". Risings of the workers occurred all over Spain, and fighting broke out between the strikers and the Civil Guard. Catalonia proclaimed itself an autonomous republic under Companys, but this movement was crushed in a day. Similarly in Madrid the Government forces had quickly the upper hand. In the Basque country the rebels continued to struggle for a fortnight, but it was in the Asturias that the insurrection reached a heroic and hopeless climax.

An Asturian People's Republic was proclaimed, and a Provisional Government which was formed enrolled a militia to defend this new state. For fifteen days Oviedo and a large part of the Asturias were in the hands of the rebels. The first Spanish troops sent against them deserted to the side of the enemy, and it was not until the Government employed native Moroccan forces and Foreign Legionaries, and Oviedo was shattered by gunfire and from the air, that the insurrection was finally crushed. The Moors and Legionaries wreaked a terrible vengeance on the helpless and unarmed populace, men, women, and children being indiscriminately butchered. The casualties of the rebellion throughout Spain were given in official figures as 1335 civilians and troops killed, and 2951 wounded. In *Spain in Revolt*<sup>1</sup> it is said that between two and three thousand were killed in the Asturias alone, and that the total death-roll was between five and six thousand. Thirty thousand persons were condemned to varying terms of imprisonment. Azaña and the Socialist leader, Largo Caballero, were arrested, but after being kept in prison for some months without trial were released. The punishment of Catalonia for her share in the rebellion was the loss of the local autonomy which had been granted her in the early days of the Republic.

After the suppression of the October rising the Right in the Cortes continued to pursue its reactionary policy, but the Government was not too stable, and a series of Cabinet changes took place. Meanwhile, the economic situation in Spain was growing daily worse. While millions were voted to the clergy, the wages of workers were reduced. In November, 1935, the agricultural labourer in

<sup>1</sup> Gannes and Repard.

Andalusia earned about 2 pesetas (1s.) per day. "There were land-owners in Estremadura who employed men for twelve hours a day and gave them one meal a day in lieu of wages."<sup>1</sup>

The Liberal forces in Spain made more vigorous efforts than before to draw up a common programme to which the apparently irreconcilable groups of Socialists, Anarchists, Separatists, and Communists could subscribe. The Cortes was dissolved on 7th January, 1936, and elections arranged for 16th February and 1st March. In France a Popular Front Pact (of Radical-Socialists, Socialists, and Communists) was signed in July, 1935, and the success which had been achieved there gave encouragement to the supporters of a Popular Front in Spain. It was not until a month before the election, however, that this was achieved. Then a union was formed, with a common platform, of Azaña's Left Republican Party, Martínez Barrios's Republican Union, Companys's Catalanian Left Party, Socialists, Communists, and other smaller Left groups. Only the Catalanian Anarchist Party refused to take part in the election campaign, and advised their supporters to abstain from voting.

The tactics of the Republican and Left Parties bore fruit in the election results. It is difficult to state exactly the number of seats which the different parties gained in the Cortes. "The instability of the affiliation of a fair number of individual deputies," wrote Peers, "makes it impossible to group the returned members otherwise than approximately. But no one, in February, 1936, would have taken strong objection to the supposition that 256 of the new deputies would normally vote with the Left, 52 with the Centre, and 165 with the Right."<sup>2</sup> Owing to the antiquated system of election which prevailed in Spain (it increased the seats of the majority party and reduced those of their adversaries), the number of deputies representing the Left and the Right parties was not proportionate to the actual number of votes that each gained. Of some 9 million votes cast, Professor Seton and R. J. Dingle gave the Right and Centre Parties a majority of over half a million.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, figures supplied by the Secretariat of the Spanish Parliament differed from this estimate and gave the Left Parties (with the Basque Nationalists) over half a million more votes than their opponents.<sup>4</sup> Roughly speaking, it seemed in February, 1936, as though the electorate in Spain was fairly evenly divided between the Right and the Left,

<sup>1</sup> *Spanish Testament*: Koestler.    <sup>2</sup> *The Spanish Tragedy*: Peers.

<sup>3</sup> *Second Thoughts on Democracy in Spain*.

<sup>4</sup> *Searchlight on Spain*: Duchess of Atholl.

although in the Cortes the Popular Front had a large majority of seats.

Portela Valladares, the Right minister in power before the elections, accepted the results without dispute and resigned, despite pressure put on him by Robles and others to remain in office and, having suspended the Cortes, to rule as a dictator.<sup>1</sup> Azaña formed a Government representing the Liberal outlook of the Popular Front, but in his Cabinet there were neither Socialists nor Communists; it was purely an administration of Liberals and Republicans. One of the first acts of the Government was to release 30,000 prisoners who were suffering for their share in the rising of October, 1934, and reinstate thousands of workers who had been thrown out of employment for the same reason. To Catalonia was restored her local independence. The Agrarian Law of 1932, which had been held up for over two years by the Centre-Right ministries of Lerroux, became again effective, and in March about 4500 peasants were settled in holdings on the land.<sup>1</sup> This rate did not satisfy the land-hungry peasants, who, taking matters into their own hands, seized land and occupied it. This movement, which began in Andalusia and Estremadura and spread to other provinces, was too powerful to be suppressed, so all that the Government could do was to legalize the seizures with as much speed as possible.

There was considerable disorder throughout Spain in the weeks after the success of the Popular Front in the Cortes elections. "Unorganized acts of hooliganism," to quote the words of Professor Peers, were perpetrated by reckless Socialists and Communists, including attacks on Churches and on members of the clergy. Some supporters of the Right were equally unrestrained, and both sides were responsible for clashes in the streets, political murders, bomb-throwing, fires, and other acts of terrorism. Had Gil Robles and Calvo Sotelo given Azaña's Government their help to crush both Fascist and Communist disorder, it is conceivable that in a short time there would have been peace throughout the country. But it was to the advantage of the reactionary parties to stir up strife and to provoke disorder. "To widespread incendiarism was added an epidemic of murders by gunmen, for at least some of which there was an uncomfortable and rapidly growing suspicion that Fascism was mainly responsible."<sup>2</sup> King-Hall in *Our Own Times* stated that the Spanish conflict was a struggle in its early stages between "anarchy and military despotism"; but it might justly be added

<sup>1</sup> *Searchlight on Spain*: Duchess of Atholl.

<sup>2</sup> *The Spanish Tragedy*: Peers.

that the military despots were as responsible for the anarchical conditions as their opponents. The wealthy classes endeavoured in every way they could to sabotage the work of the Popular Front Government. Capital was sent out of the country, business was slowed up, and landowners threatened to stop cultivating their land.

In April Gil Robles warned Azaña that the country was drifting to Bolshevism and chaos, and that it was necessary to save it. Already there were widespread rumours of preparations being made for a military coup, but the Government seemed strangely indifferent to them. As early as March negotiations had been going on in Berlin between General Sanjurjo and Hitler, and during May-June the leaders of the impending military revolt were making their final arrangements in Alicante and Lisbon with Italian and German agents.<sup>1</sup> Azaña seemed loath to grasp the dangerous nettle of revolt that was growing daily, and to tear it out by the root. In a Press interview which he gave shortly after the formation of his Government he said: "We want no dangerous innovations. We want peace and order. We are moderate." Against immoderate and unscrupulous opponents such an attitude was bound to bring disaster.

In May the first President of the Republic, Alcalá Zamora, was deposed. The Government condemned him for inviting three of Robles's semi-Fascist supporters into the Cabinet in 1934, and also for the cruelty of the punishment inflicted on the rebellious miners of the Asturias in the same year. Azaña was elected President, his place as head of the Government being taken by Casares Quiroga, a member of the Left Republican Party.

The Right deputies continued to taunt the Government with its failure to preserve order in the country. In June Calvo Sotelo issued a warning: "The army is becoming increasingly impatient, and the Government will be responsible if something happens." At the same time Sotelo and Robles drew up an indictment, which was read in the Cortes on 17th June. It said that, under the Popular Front Government, 251 churches had been burned or partially destroyed, and that 269 people had been killed and 1500 wounded. Gil Robles further estimated the number of strikes since the February elections at 340, and mentioned the wrecking of the plants of ten newspapers of the Right.

The Government refuted the figures contained in the indictment. While admitting that some churches had been destroyed, José Hernández, editor of *Mundo Obrero*, the chief Communist paper, wrote:

<sup>1</sup> *Spanish Testament*: Koestler.

"The fact is that the churches in Spain are organizational centres of the Fascists and serve as stores for their weapons. In the overwhelming majority of cases, hidden stores of arms are discovered after the churches have been set on fire. It was from these stores that people who took action against the workers' demonstrations received arms. It was in the churches that the Fascists who murdered workers received sanctuary. The wrath of the masses against the churches—but not against the Catholics—which sided with reaction and Fascism is understandable."<sup>1</sup>

In July, 1936, the antagonism between the Right and the Left came to a head. On the 12th of the month Lieutenant José Castillo, a popular member of the Assault Guards, was shot in Madrid by Fascists. The Assault Guards was a police force formed by the Republican Government in 1931, since the loyalty of the established Civil Guard to the new constitution was then suspect. Castillo's friends revenged his death immediately. On 13th July a band of them roused Calvo Sotelo in his home at three in the morning, bore him away in a police van, and shot him in the outskirts of Madrid. Both crimes excited horror among the greater number of people in the capital. The Government arrested some members of the Assault Guards who were believed to be responsible for Sotelo's death, and prepared to put them on trial. The Right rebels now decided that the moment was opportune for the rising for which they had made good preparations, and on the night of 17th-18th July they struck.

The army revolt started in Spanish Morocco, where by the morning of the 18th July the main buildings in the chief cities had been occupied by Moorish troops and detachments of the Spanish Foreign Legion. General Francisco Franco,<sup>2</sup> the leader of the revolt, arrived in Morocco by air from the Canary Islands. On 19th July Moroccan troops and Legionaries, with General Queipo de Llano in command, landed on the Spanish coast and captured Algeciras and then Seville. At the same time military insurrections broke out in all the large cities of Spain. In Madrid and Barcelona these were easily suppressed, but in other towns, particularly where a strong garrison was stationed,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Spain in Revolt* by Gannes and Repard.

<sup>2</sup> At the age of seventeen Franco volunteered for service in Morocco, and had reached the rank of commandant when he was twenty-three. He was one of the officers to whom the task of forming a Spanish Foreign Legion was entrusted. He took part in crushing the Asturian rising in 1934, and after the election of February, 1936, the Popular Front Government sent him into "exile" in the Canary Islands. This was typical of the moderation of the Left Republican ministers. Instead of rendering their enemies helpless, they punished them just enough to make them bitter and resentful (antagonism to the Republic was in any case ingrained in the officer caste), and left them unimpeded to plot as they wished.

the rebels held their own. The insurrection was successful in Morocco and in Toledo, Valladolid, Vigo, Corunna, and Saragossa. Ferrol, an important naval base, also fell into the hands of the rebels.

When the first news of the army revolt reached Madrid, Casares Quiroga, the Prime Minister, called it an "absurd scheme". His failure to realize the gravity of the situation brought about his speedy downfall; in the early hours of 19th July he resigned. A ministry under Martínez Barrios was formed, but it did not satisfy the extremists among the Republic's supporters, and after existing for only a few hours it was replaced by an administration under José Giral, the former Minister of Marine.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### SPANISH CIVIL WAR, 1936-39

WHILE the Spanish Government was not entirely taken by surprise by the military revolt which broke out in July, 1936, the seriousness of it was not at first realized. The plans of the insurgents were well laid, so that they seized throughout the country important centres from which they could carry out intensive operations against the loyalist population. In the insurgent ranks were 75 per cent of the regular army, about half the Civil Guard, and a proportion of the Assault Guards; in addition Franco had under his command large numbers of Moorish troops and Foreign Legionaries. To oppose these all that the Government had at the beginning of the war, apart from a nucleus of trained loyalist troops, was Workers' Militia units, rapidly organized and armed. The regular air force and the greater part of the navy, with the exception of the officers, were faithful to the Republic. One advantage which the rebels gained was the possession of most of the arsenals, with heavy supplies of artillery, machine-guns, tanks, and rifles. On the other hand, the Government had in its hands the gold reserves of the country, and could pay in gold for supplies from foreign states, while the insurgents could pay only with promises of commercial and other concessions. The Government controlled the east of Spain, including Madrid, and all the chief seaports except Cadiz. The Bilbao area was also in its hands. The rebel territory stretched from the north-west coast (with Corunna and Vigo) eastwards in a strip to the Pyrenees, and also southwards along the frontier of Portugal. Franco's headquarters were at Burgos. Cadiz, Seville, and Cordova in the south of Spain, and also most of the Balearic Islands were seized by Franco's troops at the beginning of the war.

Each side made use of intensive methods of propaganda to make known to the world the justice of its cause. In August, 1936, José Giral, the Prime Minister, issued a statement:

"The present situation in Spain has been provoked by the military,



the clergy, and the Fascists in an open rebellion against the Republic and the legitimate Government elected by the people.

"The existing Madrid Government is republican, without one Socialist or Communist minister, but with the support of these parties. Campaigning against reaction and Fascism and to obtain the fruition of its programme, the People's Front agreed to a popular election last February.

"This damaged the privileges of the ultra-conservatives, who are now rebelling."<sup>1</sup>

The case for the rebels was set down in an official report on Communist atrocities issued by the "National Government at Burgos", and published in the autumn of 1936. In this it was stated:

"On 18th July General Franco and other leaders declared the National revolt to free Spain from the Communist domination. Secret orders issued by Communist headquarters for the formation of a National Soviet have been discovered, and they give full details of the procedure which was to be followed."

Further on the report said:

"It is thus established by documentary evidence that this great national movement was begun just in time to forestall the Communist Revolution organized months before to establish a Soviet in Spain at the end of July."

The alleged "secret orders" were contained in four copies of a document produced by the insurgents as evidence of the Communist plot. The Duchess of Atholl<sup>2</sup> examined the document in detail, pointed out glaring inconsistencies in the text, and arrived at the conclusion "that reliable evidence of any planned Communist rising, on even a small scale, has yet to be produced". The opposite point of view is expressed by Arthur F. Loveday,<sup>3</sup> who is typical of a group of writers convinced of the authenticity of the document ("no doubt about it in the minds of students of history"), and of the activity of Soviet agents in Spain. He wrote:

"The work of the Comintern and of the Freemasons (Orient and Grand Lodge of Spain) was evident throughout the revolution, working by and with the doctrines laid down by Karl Marx, which permeated first the professional intellectuals and then a section of the proletariat. Who could doubt this when they saw the symbols of the red flag, the sickle and the hammer, the Internationale and the vocabulary of Red revolution everywhere in Spain?"

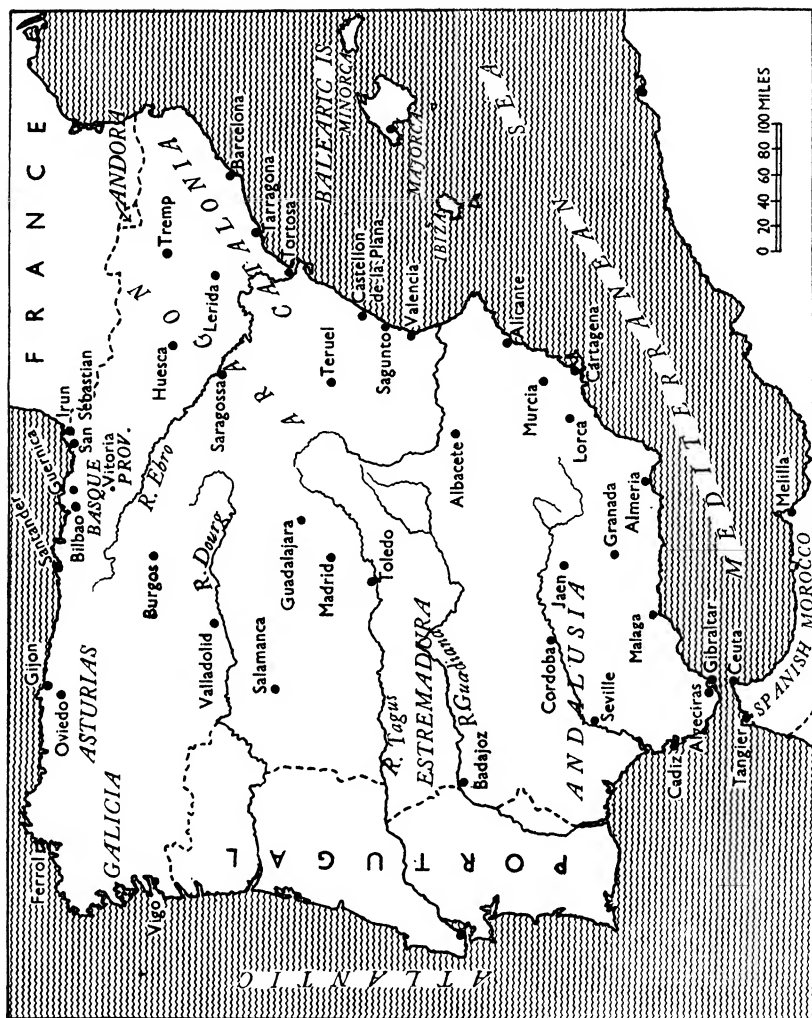
<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Spain in Revolt* by Gannes and Repard.

<sup>2</sup> *Searchlight on Spain*.

<sup>3</sup> *World War in Spain*.

# SPAIN

To illustrate  
the Spanish  
Civil War



The Burgos official report gave evidence of atrocities committed by supporters of the Republic. Both sides, it was generally conceded, were guilty of atrocities at some stage during the struggle. But while "the excesses committed by the armed forces of the Government" belonged to "a period of chaos and confusion" at the beginning of the war and lasting no more than a week or two,<sup>1</sup> those for which the rebels were responsible formed part of a systematic campaign of terrorism, carried out over a long period, in order to crush the spirit of the civilian population. Koestler quoted in *Spanish Testament* the text of a document found in the possession of a rebel officer who was captured by the Republicans on 28th July, 1936. This document contained instructions about how the war was to be waged. The following statements occurred:

"In order to safeguard the provinces occupied, it is essential to instil a certain salutary terror into the population. . . . In every case the methods resorted to must be of a clearly spectacular and impressive character, and must indicate clearly that the leaders of the troops are determined to proceed with like severity against anyone who offers resistance.

"Every town along the enemy's line of retreat and all the areas behind the enemy lines are to be considered as battle zones. In this connection, no differentiation must be observed between places harbouring enemy troops and those not doing so. The panic experienced by the civil population along the enemy's line of retreat is a factor of the utmost importance in contributing towards the demoralization of the enemy troops. The experiences of the last world war show that accidental destruction of enemy hospitals and ambulances has a highly demoralizing effect on troops.

"After the entry into Madrid . . . in the event of any opposition on the part of the populace, the streets should be put under fire without any further parleying. In view of the fact that large numbers of women are fighting on the enemy side, there should be no distinction of sex in such cases. The more ruthless we are, the more quickly shall we quell hostile opposition among the population, the more quickly will the restoration of Spain be effected."

The systematic shooting of civilian supporters of the Republic in towns captured by the insurgents, the bombing and machine-gunning of thousands of refugees who fled along the coast to Almeria after the fall of Malaga, the complete destruction of Guernica,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Spanish Testament*: Koestler.

<sup>2</sup> Pro-Franco writers asserted that Guernica was burned and destroyed by the Basques themselves. But G. L. Steer, the correspondent of *The Times*, who was on the spot, wrote: "The whole town of 7000 inhabitants, plus 3000 refugees, was slowly and systematically pounded to pieces. Over a radius of five miles a detail of the raiders' technique was to bomb separate farm-houses. . . ."

(*The Times*, 28th April, 1937.)

holy city of the Basques, by squadrons of German aeroplanes, with the death of many civilians: these were examples of the ruthless policy carried out by the insurgents and their foreign allies.

The Republicans burned churches and destroyed villages, but these were mainly sporadic outbursts by undisciplined bands, not part of a regularly conceived campaign. Harold Pemberton, a *Daily Express* correspondent with the insurgents, made this clear when he wrote (on 23rd August, 1936) that the Communists certainly committed atrocities, but that the rebels were "killing wholesale—mathematically and methodically—as a military expedient. No one must be left alive as a possible threat to the rear of their motorized columns."

The Republican attacks on churches was, in the opinion of Professor Peers, the outcome of an anti-God movement that made rapid progress in Spain in the 'thirties. This was a development of the anti-clericalism that was prevalent among certain classes, and which provided an excellent foundation for Anarchist and Communist doctrines. The anti-God movement gave rise to destruction and persecution of all kinds during the civil war: the hacking and smashing of pulpits; the breaking of pews and crucifixes; the cold-blooded slaughter of groups of novices; the torturing and murder of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of priests; the violation and murder of women.<sup>1</sup>

In the first six months of the war Franco's troops overran half the peninsula. In the north they conquered the country from Galicia to Aragon, except the Asturias and the Basque provinces; in the south, advancing from Andalusia and Estremadura and moving up the Tagus valley (the siege of Toledo was raised on the way) the rebel troops reached the outskirts of Madrid early in November. Throughout the war the most heroic struggle which the Republicans waged was that in defence of the capital. It endured persistent attacks from November, 1936, until its surrender at the end of the war in March, 1939. The insurgent advance from the south met with its first serious set-back at the gates of the city. The defenders were assisted in the critical month of November, 1936, by an International Brigade of volunteers (some 15,000) from many countries, and by Russian tanks and aeroplanes which made a timely appearance to stem the rebel advance. Thereafter, though the capital was repeatedly bombed from the air and shelled by heavy artillery, the city was so well defended by General Miaja that the enemy failed to take it by

<sup>1</sup> *Spain, the Church and the Orders.*

assault—this despite the help which the insurgents received from German and Italian troops,<sup>1</sup> including pilots flying their own machines, and from the immense supplies of munitions of all kinds which entered the country through the good services of Portugal. As early as 27th October the Portuguese Government recognized General Franco as the effective ruler of Spain. On 18th November Italy and Germany followed suit, although at that time the capital and three-fifths of the country were in the Republic's hands.

In the autumn of 1936 General Mola carried out an offensive in the north, which led to the capture of Irun on 4th September and to the occupation by the insurgents of San Sebastian. With the fall of Irun the Giral Cabinet resigned, and a new Government was formed with Francisco Caballero, the leader of the Socialists, as Prime Minister. This was the first Republican Cabinet in which Communist deputies (two of them) took their place.

The Italian allies of Franco came prominently into view in the capture of Malaga on 8th February, 1937. In March, on the Guadalupe front, north-east of Madrid, the Republicans, with the assistance of troops of the International Brigade, won their first victory. It was in this battle that Italian forces were driven back and sustained a crushing defeat.

In May, 1937, the Republican Government, which was now in Valencia, having left Madrid in November, 1936, was faced with trouble among its supporters in Barcelona. Caballero attempted to bring about some unity of control of the diverse forces which were fighting in the country against Franco, and this provoked opposition from the Anarchists of Catalonia. The Catalan authorities not being strong enough to suppress a revolt which broke out, the Central Government sent Assault Guards to help to restore order. This interference caused general resentment in Catalonia. In May Caballero's Cabinet resigned, and a Coalition Government was formed under Dr. Negrín, with Indalecio Prieto as Defence Minister.

In April, 1937, the insurgents, from their base at Vitoria, opened an offensive in the north. Almost daily they made air raids on Bilbao and the villages which lay between it and their base. On 26th April Guernica was completely destroyed from the air. This was a warning of what might happen to Bilbao, and the authorities made speedy arrangements for the evacuation of thousands of children, who were received in Britain, France, Belgium, and other friendly countries. The threat of starvation hung over Bilbao after

<sup>1</sup> By the beginning of 1937 at least 10,000 Fascist militia had arrived in Spain.

the declaration of a blockade by General Franco on 6th April, but British and other steamers risked the danger of mines and of attack by insurgent warships to bring food that was sorely needed to the beleaguered Basques. The city, with but a scanty store of munitions, could not hold out indefinitely against an enemy who had apparently a limitless supply of all kinds of weapons, and on 19th June it fell. The insurgents continued their Biscayan campaign. Santander surrendered at the end of August, and the offensive ended with the fall of Gijon in October. The Asturias and the Basque Provinces were conquered.

After the fall of Gijon there was a comparative lull. In October, 1937, the Republican Government was transferred from Valencia to Barcelona. Meanwhile, a "people's anti-Fascist army" was being organized and trained under the Minister of Defence to replace the militia bands which had so far carried on the struggle. This army launched an offensive on Teruel, in Aragon, on 15th December, which achieved considerable success. The town was occupied, and Colonel Rey, the rebel commandant, surrendered. But the success was short-lived, for in an insurgent attack, started in February, 1938, Teruel again changed hands. The Republicans were "defeated by a lack of staying power due to inferiority of material resources".<sup>1</sup>

At the end of 1937 the Republican Government was still in control of one half of the population and about two-fifths of the land of Spain. In its territory there was a serious food shortage, in some places almost a famine, while in the districts which the Burgos Government ruled there was not the same scarcity of supplies. The insurgents, moreover, had no difficulty in importing huge stocks of war materials from Germany and Italy. The Soviet Government was willing to supply the Republic with munitions, but the lack of any convenient line of communication between Russia and Spain obviously hampered the transport of goods.

In March, 1938, a rebel offensive in Aragon started. It was then that Barcelona endured a three days' terrible bombing, with 815 killed and 2200 wounded.<sup>1</sup> The Republican army could not withstand the insurgent advance, and on 15th April Franco's troops reached the sea near Tortosa, and thus drove a wedge in between Catalonia and the Government territory in the south. From Tortosa the insurgents continued their attack along the coast southwards against Castellon and Sagunto with the object of capturing Valencia.

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Year Book, 1939.*

On 15th June Castellon fell. To create a diversion the Republicans launched an offensive on 25th July by crossing the Ebro. They made some progress, but in the ensuing counter-attack they were driven back over the river.

On 23rd December, 1938, the last phase of the war started when Franco opened an offensive against Catalonia. With large bodies of Italian and German troops still under his command (in December, 1937, Dr. Negrín disbanded the International Brigade and its members left Spain), with an overwhelming superiority over the enemy in aeroplanes, artillery, and ammunition, Franco saw victory in sight. In both Britain and France an urgent demand to allow munitions to be sent to the Republican troops arose, but neither Government was willing to break the so-called Non-Intervention Agreement, under which supplies of munitions to both sides were forbidden. Barcelona surrendered to Franco on 26th January, 1938, while thousands of refugees, fleeing from the devastated city, crossed the frontier into France.

In February, 1939, it was obvious that the Republic had no hope of victory. Minorca, the only one of the Balearic Islands which still remained in the possession of loyal troops, was now handed over to Franco. A British cruiser helped to bring this about by taking a rebel officer to the island to negotiate the surrender. Minorca was bombed by Italian planes while the peace talks were in progress, in disobedience to orders, the Burgos authorities declared.

On 27th February, 1938, both Britain and France gave official and unconditional recognition to General Franco. The end of the war was near. Madrid still held out, but Franco was preparing a grim attack on it. Azaña, the President of the Republic, resigned. He issued a statement saying that the commander-in-chief of the Spanish armies had told him that the "war was irremediably lost". In Madrid a Defence Council was formed to negotiate peace with Franco, but the rebels demanded unconditional surrender. On 28th March Colonel Casado, the Defence Minister of this council, ordered the troops to abandon their positions, and with General Miaja he left the capital for Valencia. On 29th March Franco's men entered the city, and on the same day Valencia and other Republican strongholds surrendered. Roughly a third of the country yielded to the rebels without bloodshed.

The part which German and Italian troops had taken to ensure Franco's victory was not left in doubt after hostilities ceased.

German and Italian contingents joined in a Victory Parade held in Madrid on 19th May. Leaving Spain they then received an official welcome on their return home. At a Victory Parade in Berlin, some 17,000 German soldiers who had fought in Spain marched past Hitler. The Fuehrer thought it no longer necessary to be silent about Germany's share in the victory "over democracy and Bolshevism". In his speech to the troops he confessed that Franco had addressed an appeal to him for help as early as July, 1936, and that he had agreed then to support the rebels, acting, moreover, in complete accord with Mussolini in this matter. He admitted that it had been painful for him to conceal, while the war was actually in progress, the part taken in the fighting by the German troops. Field-Marshal Goering added this confirmation that "all the important victories of General Franco were obtained with the help of German volunteers".<sup>1</sup> Mussolini was no whit behind in claiming credit for Franco's success, "from the first day until the final victory". The *Forze Armate*, a weekly review, disclosed in detail the extent of Italy's participation in the civil war. Among the points mentioned were these: in four months (December, 1936-April, 1937) 100,000 men, 4370 motor vehicles, 40,000 tons of war material, 750 guns were transported from Italy to Spain; 17 steamers, 4 hospital ships, and 40 naval units were thereafter employed in keeping the army supplied, and in bringing home 14,858 sick and wounded. The review mentioned the part played by Italian submarines in attacking merchant ships making for ports in Republican Spain, and in action against Republican war vessels. The Italian air force in Spain comprised 5099 military airmen and 312 civil assistants. In all 5318 bombardments were carried out and 2700 tons of bombs dropped, besides the firing of over a million rounds of machine-gun ammunition.<sup>2</sup>

The disclosures of Hitler and Mussolini made sad reading for those who during the war had been ardent supporters of non-intervention. It was on 1st August, 1936, that Blum's Government in France decided, with the approval of the British Cabinet, to work for a policy of non-intervention in Spain. In theory the principle was sound, since it lessened the danger that the Spanish conflict would develop into a general European war. In practice non-intervention proved a farce, and was one of the main causes of the Spanish Government's defeat.

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 9th June, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Times*, 9th June, 1939.



On 9th September, 1936, a Non-Intervention Committee met for the first time in London, most of the European states, including Italy and Germany, being represented. The only notable absentee was Portugal, whose Government was sympathetic to Franco, and through whose territory supplies could with the greatest of ease be sent to the insurgents. The principle of non-intervention was agreed to, although this prevented the legitimate Government of Spain from obtaining war materials from foreign countries, a right which it could claim both by international law and from the point of view of abstract justice.

But the policy of non-intervention was not observed by Italy and Germany; or by France and Russia, although the help they gave to the Spanish Government was small in comparison with that which Franco received from his allies. The position of neutrality which Britain adopted proved in practice of advantage to the rebels. On 19th August, 1936, the British Board of Trade revoked all licences for the export of arms, ammunition, aeroplanes, &c., to Spain. On 11th January, 1937, the British Government placed a ban on the recruitment of volunteers for Spain. Meanwhile, Germany and Italy were pouring troops and munitions into the insurgent territories.

The Non-Intervention Committee decided to adopt some measure of control to prevent the sending of war materials to Spain, and on 8th March, 1937, despite the efforts of Italy and Germany to prevent its being accepted, a control scheme was agreed to. In April it came into force. It was an elaborate scheme, with international agents in Spain to report the arrival (by smuggling) of foreign volunteers or munitions; observers on all merchantmen of the non-intervention powers bound for Spain to ensure that no contraband was being carried; and a naval patrol off the coasts of the peninsula by British, French, German, and Italian warships. There were various loopholes in the scheme; the Portuguese coast, for example, was not patrolled, nor was there any control of ships arriving in Spain from the Canary Islands, a rebel stronghold.

While acting on naval patrol in May, 1937, the German battleship, the *Deutschland*, was bombed by Republican aeroplanes, some of the crew being killed and others wounded.<sup>1</sup> Germany retaliated by shelling Almeria from the sea, and then retired from the control scheme. Italy followed her example. They were both induced to

<sup>1</sup> The Spanish Government asserted that the *Deutschland* fired first at the aeroplanes, but the Germans denied this.

return, but immediately afterwards Germany alleged that an attack had been made on her cruiser *Leipzig*. She wished Britain and France to join her in a demonstration off the Valencia coast, but Britain refused, since she was not satisfied that the alleged attack on the *Leipzig* had actually taken place. Thereupon Germany and Italy withdrew from the control scheme, this time finally.

In the summer of 1937 the Mediterranean became dangerous waters for merchantmen. Neutral ships were liable to sudden attack by under-water craft. "The submarines in question, though unidentified, were certainly of Italian origin," wrote King-Hall.<sup>1</sup> By 6th August, 14 attacks had been made on British ships, and H.M.S. *Hunter* had been damaged by a mine. On 1st September, the S.S. *Woodford* was sunk by a torpedo fired from a submarine. The British Government was determined to put an end to this piracy, and convened a conference of the interested powers at Nyon on 10th September. Neither Italy, who refused an invitation to attend, nor Germany was represented. A scheme for an anti-piracy control of the Mediterranean was quickly devised, the French and British naval commands volunteering to provide the units necessary for patrol. Italy was invited to share in the control, and agreed to take a zone. For a time the Mediterranean became safer waters for merchant ships making their way with legitimate cargoes to Spain, although in October the naval patrol did not prevent the sinking by a bomb of S.S. *Jean Weems*. "In all there were twenty-five attacks on British vessels to the end of 1937, eight of them being on ships of the navy."<sup>2</sup> British and other neutral ships were also damaged by rebel air attacks when they were anchored in Spanish harbours. In a speech to the Commons on 21st June, 1938, Mr. Chamberlain said that it was impossible to protect British ships in territorial waters without intervening in the Spanish War, and thereby cutting across the whole policy which the Government had been following.

The question of foreign troops in Spain was one to which the Non-Intervention Committee gave serious consideration. By the end of 1937 a British plan for the withdrawal of these troops had been accepted by the Committee. There were interminable delays in putting the plan into operation, delays caused mainly by the obstructive tactics of Italy and Germany. In the summer of 1938 Britain suggested a simpler arrangement, the substance of which was this: two international commissions were to be sent to Spain to count the number of foreign combatants on each side, and to

<sup>1</sup> *Our Own Times*.  
(1774)

<sup>2</sup> *Searchlight on Spain*: Duchess of Atholl.

arrange for the withdrawal of these according to a fixed time-table; secondly, when 10,000 non-Spanish combatants had been withdrawn from the side with the fewer number of foreigners in its ranks, and a proportionately larger number from the other side, belligerent rights<sup>1</sup> were to be granted to General Franco. It was mainly on the question of belligerent rights that the scheme fell through. While the Republican Government accepted Britain's proposals, Franco rejected the principle of proportionate withdrawal, and refused, moreover, to dispense with any of his foreign auxiliaries until belligerent rights were accorded to him. By the end of 1938 Dr. Negrín had dismissed all the foreign volunteers from the Republican ranks. A body of 10,000 Italian soldiers embarked for home, thereby bringing into force in November, 1938, an Anglo-Italian Agreement which had been signed early in the year. The operation of the pact was conditional on the withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain, and the Duce made this "token" gesture to satisfy the British Government. It was only after the Republican forces had been completely defeated in the spring of 1939 that the Italian and German troops finally left Spain, after handing over to the Burgos Government large supplies of munitions and other war materials.

<sup>1</sup> To accord to Franco the status of belligerent would have been to condone his "rebellion" against a legitimate Government. Moreover, he would then have claimed certain rights: of blockade, of the confiscation of contraband of war, &c. These would have been of considerable advantage to him.

## CHAPTER XXX

### POPULAR FRONT IN FRANCE

AFTER the Stavisky scandal<sup>1</sup> a succession of French Governments of the Right started with the appointment of Gaston Doumergue as Prime Minister on 9th February, 1934. A breach with his colleague, M. Herriot, and his Radical Socialist followers led to the resignation of Doumergue on 8th November, 1934, M. Flandin, his Minister of Public Works, being then called upon to form a Government. Flandin's administration ended on 31st May, 1935, on account of the Chamber's refusal to give the Prime Minister special powers for six months "to take with force of law all measures for restoring the public finances, for the recovery of economic activity, for the defence of public credit, and the maintenance of the currency". Then followed the ministries of Bouisson (1st-4th June, 1935), Laval (7th June, 1935-22nd January, 1936), and Sarraut (24th January-4th June, 1936). With Sarraut's resignation the period of Right administrations came for the time being to an end.

In the years 1934-36 internal conditions in France were as unsettled as ever. Despite a reduction in State services in 1935, including cuts in salaries and pensions, the usual Budget deficit faced the Minister of Finance. France's expenditure on a huge rearmament programme was a contributory cause of her financial weakness, but the main reason was that she had been living for years beyond her means. Strikes were frequent in these years, and, by way of counterpoise, the year 1935 saw the increasing influence of Fascist and semi-Fascist groups in France. To consolidate the opposition to these extreme reactionary parties, the Socialists joined with the Radicals and the Communists to form a *Front Populaire*, as it was called, which justified the hopes of its creators by winning a victory in the elections of May, 1936, with a comprehensive programme of social and political reforms. On 4th June, 1936, Léon Blum, a Jew of very great ability, formed the first Popular Front administration.

Scarcely had Blum formed his Government when an epidemic

<sup>1</sup> See page 243.

of unofficial strikes broke out, which brought the industrial life of Paris almost to a standstill, and spread quickly to other important centres in the provinces. Soon a quarter of a million workers had downed tools to force the Government to redeem its election pledges without delay. Frequently they remained in the factories and workshops, and the "stay-in strike" became a new feature in industrial disputes. Blum, while he took steps to uphold law and order in the country, satisfied the strikers by announcing that a series of social measures of a far-reaching character would be speedily presented to the Chamber. He kept his word, and by the summer the legislation passed by the Popular Front Government included the following: a 40-hour working week—at least in principle, since its enforcement in all industries proved difficult, and in some cases impossible; a minimum wage for workers, and the restoration of the wage cuts imposed by Laval's administration; paid holidays for all classes of workers; the nationalization of the armaments industry; the reform of the Bank of France; and the dissolution of the Fascist Leagues.

The immediate results of Blum's legislation were not too happy. The 40-hour week, which lowered production and raised prices, tended to make worse France's adverse trade balance. Capital, moreover, was sent out of the country, and the economic position continued to deteriorate. In September, 1936, another epidemic of strikes broke out, for the workers found that, with a rise in the cost of living, their increased wages did not help them much. Blum's administration, mainly owing to the skill of the Premier, surmounted the difficulties that faced it and held together. On 1st October, 1936, the Government devalued the franc by between 25 and 34 per cent. Britain, France, and the U.S.A. signed a Three-Power Currency Agreement in September, agreeing to act in collaboration to minimize disturbances in the foreign exchange markets arising out of this devaluation.

In February, 1937, Blum found it necessary to proclaim a "pause" in the Popular Front Programme, for the pace had been too quick. His extreme supporters considered this a surrender to the Capitalist forces in the country, and showed their displeasure. On 16th March serious rioting broke out at Clichy, a suburb of Paris, during which six workers were killed, and strikes were declared in other districts in France. In April Blum asked for plenary powers to regulate matters of currency and credit by decrees, and when the Senate refused these except with conditions that Blum would not accept,

the Premier resigned on 19th April, and the first Popular Front Government came to an end.

The new Prime Minister was Chautemps, whose "Cabinet of Republican Unity" (the Left Press referred to it as the second Popular Front Government) was almost the same as that of his predecessor, Blum himself joining it as Vice-Premier. Chautemps promised the Socialists to remain faithful to the programme of the Popular Front, but in his aim and method he intended to follow more Radical (i.e. Liberal) principles than Socialist. He was granted for two months the plenary powers refused to Blum, and Bonnet, the Finance Minister, made good use of them. But although he drastically reduced State expenditure, France seemed unable to escape from her financial troubles.

Labour unrest continued, and was fanned in November, 1937, by the revelations of Marx Dormoy, Minister of the Interior, of a widespread conspiracy to undermine the Republic. The conspirators, who were politically of the extreme Right, were members of a treasonable organization called the *Comité Secret d'Action Révolutionnaire* (Secret Committee of Revolutionary Action); the popular name for them was Hooded Men (*Cagouleurs*). It was a nation-wide organization with men of influence at its head, including the leaders of the *Croix de Feu* and other Fascist Leagues which had been suppressed by the Government, and prominent business men, a number of whom were arrested. Details of the ramifications and international aspects of the plot were whispered about.<sup>1</sup> The police discovered that the Hooded Men were organized thoroughly into divisions, brigades, &c., and in Paris and other large cities private arsenals, the weapons in which were mostly of German and Italian manufacture, were unearthed. In parts of Paris underground tunnels for the concentration of troops had been prepared. It was proved that the numerous bomb and other outrages during the summer and autumn of 1937 had been the work of the Hooded Men. The purpose of these outrages was to discredit the Popular Front, and to prepare the ground for a Fascist coup.

At the beginning of 1938 Chautemps showed that he intended to break his connection with the Communists. This lost him the support of the Socialist members of his Cabinet, and on 14th January he resigned. Four days later, after both Bonnet and Blum had attempted without success to form Cabinets, Chautemps returned to office at the head of what was still considered a Popular Front Govern-

<sup>1</sup> See *The Battle for Peace*: F. Elwyn Jones.

ment, although his Cabinet consisted almost entirely of Radicals, there being but one Independent and one Socialist Union member in it. Less than two months later, on 10th March, Chautemps, having lost the support of both Socialists and Communists, again resigned, and France was without a Government when on the following day Hitler invaded Austria. Blum was called upon to form a ministry, but it was not till 13th March that he succeeded. This was again a Popular Front Government (the fourth), supported by the Communists, although they had no member in the Cabinet. Blum did not survive long; he resigned on 8th April. M. Lebrun (President of the Republic since May, 1932) called on Daladier, the War Minister, to take office, and he agreed to form an administration on as wide a basis as possible. Although the supporters of the Left claimed that the Government which Daladier formed was in the tradition of the Popular Front, this union was virtually dead; the Right with more justice insisted that Daladier's ministry was the first since the elections of 1936 that definitely did not represent the Popular Front.

Daladier's declaration of policy to the Chamber—he described his Government as one of national defence—was well received. He pointed out that it was essential, in the unsettled state of Europe, that all the national energies should be united, and he expressed the Government's determination to make certain that the work of manufacturing arms necessary for the country's safety was quickly resumed.<sup>1</sup> Plenary powers, which had been refused to Blum, were granted by the Senate to Daladier, and he was able to legislate by decree till the end of July. The franc was devalued, and stabilized at 179 to the pound sterling. In August the 40-hour week, the great reform of the Popular Front, was modified, particularly for those engaged in war work. In the autumn of 1938 Daladier's ministry was faced with the Czechoslovak crisis. France was not entirely unprepared. In the early months of the year General Gamelin had been placed in command of the defence forces of the country, and during the summer these had been considerably strengthened. But France was not called upon to fight; the Munich Agreement postponed a European war. That the habit of surrender was not ingrained in the French spirit was shown in December when, after a so-called "spontaneous" demonstration occurred in the Italian Chamber in favour of the return by France to Italy of Tunis and Corsica, Daladier said bluntly that his countrymen would uphold with all the means

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 13th April, 1938.

in their power the absolute integrity of the territories flying the national flag.

In France in 1938 there was a conflict between the traditional League policy, which the Government had more or less consistently followed since the Versailles Treaty, and the policy of appeasement, advocated by Britain's Prime Minister, Chamberlain. Delbos and Paul-Boncour, Foreign Ministers under Chautemps and Blum respectively, were not in favour of the new policy, but, when Bonnet took control of foreign affairs on 10th April in Daladier's Cabinet, Chamberlain had a colleague with whom he could work in sympathy. The pro-Munich policy reached its high-water mark on 6th December, 1938, when von Ribbentrop paid a visit to Paris, and signed with Bonnet a declaration that there were no territorial differences between France and Germany, and that any dispute that might arise would be settled by diplomatic means and not by war.



## CHAPTER XXXI

### CONQUEST OF AUSTRIA

UP to 1933, before the rise of Hitler in Germany, political dissension in Austria had its roots in the hostility existing between the Socialists of Vienna and the Conservative inhabitants of the provinces, poor and envious of the capital. Both parties had their military forces. The Schutzbund, a democratic militia, was ready to defend the Social Democrats, while the Catholic Christian Social Party stood behind the Heimwehr, a Fascist army, whose leaders were Prince Starhemberg and Major Fey. How the inevitable struggle between the Social Democrats and their opponents would have developed had they been left to themselves it is impossible to say. A third fighting group, the Austrian Nazis, entered the arena immediately after the institution of the Third Reich, and a new twist was given to the political drama that was being unfolded. The Nazis provided themselves as well as they could with arms—smuggled mostly to them across the Austro-German frontier.

Hitler, himself an Austrian, never concealed his conviction that his country was an integral part of Greater Germany. In the second paragraph of *Mein Kampf* he wrote:

“German-Austria must be restored to the great German Motherland. And not indeed on any grounds of economic calculation whatsoever. No, no. Even if the union were a matter of economic indifference, and even if it were to be disadvantageous from the economic standpoint, still it ought to take place. People of the same blood should be in the same Reich.”

The shadow of Hitler's power loomed threateningly over Austria, weakened as it was by the divergent politics of the Social Democrats, the Heimwehr, and the Nazis. The Socialists were in the least enviable position, for both the other parties regarded them as enemies, with whom no compromise was possible. The Heimwehr and the Nazis were alike in wishing to introduce in Austria some form of totalitarian Government; they differed only in the ally from whom each hoped to receive help. The interests of Prince Starhemberg

and the Heimwehr were linked with those of Italy; the Austrian Nazis, on the other hand, were worshippers at Hitler's shrine. In 1933 the antagonism of these two parties was reflected in the relations between Hitler and Mussolini. The Duce watched the growth of the Nazi tyranny with a hostile eye. He was determined to uphold the independence of Austria; for if Hitler effected the *Anschluss* which he desired, a German military force would appear on the Brenner Pass and menace Italy's hold on the Austrian Tyrol.

On 20th May, 1932, Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss, a man of peasant stock, and a member of the Christian Social Party, was appointed Chancellor. In March, 1933, he dealt a blow at democratic principles by suspending the constitution and proceeding to rule, with the support of the Heimwehr, as a dictator. The Austrian Nazis, following the technique that had proved effective in Germany, initiated a campaign of terrorism throughout the country. At the same time German wireless stations filled the ether with bitter complaints about the Government of Dollfuss, accusing it naïvely of suppressing the liberties of the people, and with defamatory insults directed against the Chancellor himself. Dollfuss was a fighter and took up the challenge. He kept a tight rein on the activities of the Austrian Nazis. When Dr. Frank, Bavarian Minister of Justice, paid a visit to Austria, he was told that his presence was undesirable and was forbidden to make political speeches. Hitler's reply to this was to impose a prohibitive tax of 1000 marks on those Germans who wished to visit Austria, a measure that killed the German tourist traffic to the south. Dollfuss was not to be browbeaten, and in June he suppressed the Austrian Nazi Party. France, Britain, and Italy protested vigorously in Berlin against the campaign being carried out to undermine Austria's independence, and in the autumn there was an interval of peace.

In view of the hostility of the Third Reich, the Chancellor's only hope of preserving his country's freedom was to rely completely on the favour of Mussolini. In the winter of 1933-4 the Italian Government secretly gave subsidies to the Heimwehr, and the price demanded for this assistance by Mussolini was the suppression of the Social Democrats,<sup>1</sup> a price Dollfuss was willing to pay. It would be to his advantage, he realized, to rid himself of one of his enemies within the state. With the Socialists out of the way, he had the better chance of victory in a straight fight between the Heimwehr and the Nazis. A conflict with the Socialists was

<sup>1</sup> *International Affairs*: Carr.

provoked by the Austrian Government on 12th February, 1934, and for four days a battle raged in Vienna. The model tenements that the Socialists had built became now fortresses in which they sought protection, and it was not until these were shattered by heavy artillery fire that the defenders surrendered. Their struggle was a magnificent but a hopeless one. "It took a modern army of 19,000 men, with machine-guns, armoured cars, and field artillery, four days to crush 5000 forlorn Schutzbundlers."<sup>1</sup> About a thousand people lost their lives in the fighting. Nine Socialist leaders were hanged.

It was generally conceded that the February conflict had been provoked by the Heimwehr—the attack took the Socialists in Vienna entirely by surprise. But the interpretation of contemporary events depends very much on the political bias of the writer. Here is the point of view of Kurt von Schuschnigg, Vice-Chancellor at the time:

"The Government could not be held responsible for the February outbreak of 1934, which they neither caused nor, still less, desired, but which must rather be regarded as a natural calamity, brought about by a number of fanatics who, actuated by party spirit and obstinately determined to seize supreme power in a state which they were not otherwise prepared to serve, gave the signal for revolt."

The Bolshevik bogey<sup>2</sup> was resurrected by Schuschnigg.

"Plans were afterwards discovered which showed that the irresponsible leaders were in deadly earnest and had systematically prepared the outbreak, not as a measure of defence, but as an attack upon which they were staking all. In the event of success, the intention was to establish a reign of terror, accompanied by the blowing up of public buildings, the setting up of prearranged revolutionary tribunals, the preparation of black lists, and all the paraphernalia familiar from the Bela Kun epoch in Hungary and Kurt Eisner's *Putsch* in Munich."<sup>3</sup>

The fighting in February, 1934, destroyed Social Democracy in Austria, and Dollfuss had now but one enemy—the Nazis—to deal with, but his task proved no less difficult than before. On 30th

<sup>1</sup> *Inside Europe*: Gunther.

<sup>2</sup> If Fascist historians are to be believed, the outstanding feature of the twenty years after the Great War was the futility of Communist preparations for revolt. Time and again (in Germany, Austria, Spain, Greece, and so on) the Reds seem to have made elaborate plans to destroy civilization, and these plans with tiresome monotony have been invariably anticipated by the Fascist saviours of their country. When the Red outburst was timed to break, the leaders were to be found drinking coffee in a public restaurant, or going off on holiday, or playing at home with their children. Invariably they were unaware that their revolution was on the point of starting.

<sup>3</sup> *Farewell Austria*.

January, 1934, Hitler made one of his oft-repeated declarations that he had no intention of interfering with the independence of Austria. He said: "The assertion that the German Reich plans to coerce the Austrian state is absurd and cannot be substantiated or proved."<sup>1</sup> For a month or two in the spring of 1934 there was comparative peace in Austria, and then in May the Nazi terror broke out afresh. The task of the Heimwehr, to keep order and to check the activities of the Nazis, was not too easy. In July, 1934, what proved an abortive Nazi rising occurred. For a brief time the Nazis occupied the Chancellery in Vienna; then they were forced to surrender. Nazi rebels ran amok in various places in the country, but in a few days order was restored and the Government was again in complete control. The only success which the rebels could claim was the assassination of Dollfuss, who was shot in cold blood in the Chancellery, and was refused medical attention as he bled to death.

Had the coup been successful, Hitler's Government would immediately have given the Nazis in Austria its approval and help. An Austrian legion, composed of Nazi exiles from Austria, was ready on German territory to march on the word of command. But the failure of the coup and the reaction in Italy made Hitler pause. Mussolini dispatched three complete divisions to the Italo-Austrian frontier, and made it plain that, if Germany attempted to send forces into Austria, Italy would also take action. The Government of the Reich promptly disclaimed all connection with the rising, and punctiliously recalled the German Ambassador from Vienna, because he had taken part in negotiations between the Nazi leaders and the Heimwehr when it was obvious that the coup had failed. The successor of Dollfuss was not, as the leaders of the *Putsch* had intended, Rintelin, the Nazi nominee, but the dead Chancellor's second-in-command, Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg. The new Chancellor, like his predecessor, regarded Italy as the sole friend upon whom he could rely, and Mussolini exercised what was virtually a quasi-protectorate over Austria. Prince Starhemberg was appointed Vice-Chancellor, but in 1936, Schuschnigg, who was determined to keep control of matters in his own hands, rid himself of this ambitious rival. In the following year the Heimwehr was dissolved as an independent force, and incorporated into the State militia. Schuschnigg's Cabinet was composed of friends of the Chancellor's, but in the background it was Mussolini who kept the dictatorship on its unstable feet.

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 31st January, 1934.

In 1935 Hitler was apparently reconciled to the status of Austria as a dependency of Italy, for he could not afford to quarrel at that time with the Italian dictator. On 21st May, 1935, the Reich Chancellor insisted again that Germany neither wished nor intended to interfere in the domestic affairs of Austria, or to annex Austria, or to conclude an *Anschluss*. On 11th July, 1936, a formal agreement to this effect was signed by Franz von Papen, German minister to Austria, and by Schuschnigg. By this treaty Germany acknowledged the full sovereignty of the Austrian state, and declared that National Socialism in Austria was a domestic affair which the Reich Government would neither directly nor indirectly attempt to influence. In return Austria agreed to release Nazi political prisoners, and to allow Nazis, as individuals, to join the Government militia (the Fatherland Front).

But at the end of 1936 a new orientation in the European political scene took place. Mussolini, angered by the policy of sanctions which Britain, France, and other League powers had carried out against him during the Abyssinian War, looked with some measure of gratitude to Germany, who had not taken part in this economic attack upon Italy. The opportunity was one that Hitler was quick to seize. The outcome of conversations in October, 1936, between Count Ciano and Baron von Neurath, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries, was the formation of the Rome-Berlin Axis, virtually an alliance directed against the democracies. On 2nd November Mussolini in a speech in Milan referred to the scope of this agreement. Its main provisions were: parallel action by Germany and Italy in Spain, where civil war was raging; identity of attitude at Geneva, Germany undertaking not to return to the League until Italy received satisfactory recognition of her Abyssinian conquest; identity of attitude as regards the new Rhineland Pact which was to be settled, the two countries undertaking not to negotiate separately, and in any case to negotiate only within the scope of limited commitments which would exclude the allies and friends of France.<sup>1</sup> By signing this agreement Mussolini voluntarily sacrificed Austria to his new ally.

The year 1937 was one during which a sort of truce was observed by the German and Austrian Governments. In February, 1937, on the occasion of Baron von Neurath's visit to Austria, the German Foreign Minister and Schuschnigg issued a joint *communiqué* announcing their conviction that the treaty of the previous July was

<sup>1</sup> *Blackmail or War: Tabouis.*

a suitable basis for further co-operation. The German Government tried to get from Schuschnigg an assurance that a Habsburg restoration would not take place in Austria, but this the Chancellor refused, insisting that the matter was one which affected Austria alone.<sup>1</sup> On the whole the conciliatory note struck by the Austro-German Treaty of July, 1936, prevailed during the following year. In the summer of 1937 a joint committee which had been formed to promote a better understanding between the two German peoples carried out its discussions in a fairly friendly atmosphere. In a newspaper article von Papen, Germany's ambassador in Austria, wrote that the treaty was "a basis of reconciliation" between the Reich and her neighbour.

On 11th January, 1938, Hitler, in an address to the Diplomatic Corps, used these words:

"Germany is making every effort, in reconciling the apparently conflicting social interests which threaten the integral unity of all nations, to give her people the happiness of a community held together in brotherly fashion; to assist those in poorer circumstances, and to further all good and healthy instincts for the material and personal well-being of the people as a whole.

"With the same spirit which governs our actions at home we wish to establish our relations abroad.

"We believe that the tasks which Providence has set us all, if we are to dwell amicably side by side on this earth, must be solved in the same spirit; we wish, therefore, to co-operate sincerely and confidently with all nations and all states who share these sentiments, and to put this, our earnest striving, into practice."<sup>2</sup>

With characteristic rapidity the spirit of the German Chancellor changed a week or two later. His conciliatory attitude towards Austria disappeared; he became the Fuehrer, issuing orders and demanding instant obedience. Indicative of the change about to take place in Hitler's approach to Austria, there was an upheaval in diplomatic and military circles in the Reich in the first week of February, 1938. Herr von Ribbentrop ousted Baron von Neurath from the Foreign Office, and a number of army generals, including Field-Marshal von Blomberg, the War Minister, and General von Fritsch, Commander-in-Chief of the land armies, were replaced by less conservative leaders. Hitler announced that the supreme command of all three branches of Germany's armed forces would henceforth be exercised by himself. This victory of the extremists

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 24th February, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Germany Speaks*.

in the Reich was a hint of the active policy that the Fuehrer was now ready to pursue.

On 12th February, 1938, Hitler, summoning Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden, virtually handed an ultimatum to the Austrian Chancellor, with German generals at hand to hint what would happen if the Fuehrer's demands were refused. Schuschnigg yielded, and on his return to Vienna carried out Hitler's instructions by appointing Dr. Seyss-Inquart, a prominent Nazi, as Minister of the Interior with charge of the police, and by granting an amnesty to all political prisoners. He agreed, moreover, to conduct a foreign policy in accordance with Hitler's wishes. It was generally recognized that Schuschnigg had now been forced into a position in which he could not prevent the Nazi leaders from speedily gaining control over Austria's destiny.

On 20th February, 1938, Hitler delivered a speech in the Reichstag, judged to be the most violent and the most menacing he had yet made. He made a vehement attack on Eden, Britain's Foreign Minister, declared that he had no longer any intention of ever joining the League of Nations, emphasized the Reich's determination to protect German people who were not in a position to secure their general human and political freedom (this was a threat to both Austria and Czechoslovakia), asserted categorically that Bolshevism must be defeated in Spain, and hoped for continued collaboration with Italy and Japan. On the same day the resignation of Anthony Eden was announced. According to an official announcement, the Foreign Minister took this step because he disapproved of the intention of Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, and the rest of the Cabinet, to begin Anglo-Italian conversations with a view to removing the differences that existed between the two countries. Eden considered that promises which Mussolini had made to observe the policy of non-intervention in the Spanish War had not been carried out, and that the moment was not opportune for entering into further discussions. Eden also mentioned that the reason for his resignation had a wider basis than this, namely his inability to see eye to eye with Chamberlain in other matters. "He had," he said, "become increasingly conscious of a difference of outlook in respect of international problems of the day and the methods by which we should seek to resolve them." In other words Eden apparently wished to stick up to the dictators, instead of trying to appease them by concessions.

Eden's resignation was a blow to M. Delbos, the Foreign Secretary

of France, for Eden had indicated two days before that he was prepared to join with France in an effort to ward off the immediate menace that hung over Schuschnigg and Austria. Now there was no hope of Britain's interference. "Later it was learned that not only the Italian issue, but also the Austrian issue had precipitated Mr. Eden's resignation."<sup>1</sup> His successor at the Foreign Office was Lord Halifax, but the main threads of Britain's foreign policy seemed to lie, as before, in the hands of the Prime Minister.

In a speech which Chamberlain delivered in the Commons two days after Eden's resignation, he referred to the League of Nations in terms which in effect told Hitler to go ahead. He said:

"The League as constituted to-day is unable to provide collective security for anybody. We must not try to delude ourselves, and still more we must not try to delude small and weak nations, into thinking that they will be protected by the League against aggression when we know that nothing of the kind can be expected.

"I still have faith that the League may be reconstituted. I doubt very much whether the League will ever do its best work so long as its members are nominally bound to impose sanctions or to use force in support of the Covenant."<sup>2</sup>

The echo of Chamberlain's words haunted the French Chamber a few days later when a full-dress foreign debate was in progress. While the speakers on the Left urged energetic action by France and Britain to save the forcible annexation of Austria by Germany, the Government remained non-committal, gave no answer to the question, "How are you going to help Austria?", and was satisfied apparently with the adoption of a motion that "The Chamber trusted that the Government would safeguard national dignity, assure the maintenance of peace, and the respect of treaties within the frame-work of collective security and the League of Nations".<sup>3</sup> The spirit of appeasement as a means of satisfying the dictators was already hovering over the French Chamber.

After the Berchtesgaden Agreement the Nazis in Austria concluded that they could do as they liked, and that the way was open for them to press for the complete "nazification" of the state. The extremists among them were anxious for a rapid "assimilation" of Germany and Austria. On 9th March, 1938, Dr. Schuschnigg announced that a plebiscite was to be held on the 13th on the question of the political future of Austria. He assured the people that, if he did not get a convincing majority of votes, he would resign in favour

<sup>1</sup> *France and Munich*: Alexander Werth.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 332, 5th Series, p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> *France and Munich*: Werth.



of a complete Nazi administration. His appeal to the electorate was for "a free, German, independent, Social Christian and united Austria, for peace and work, and the equality of all who profess their faith in people and Fatherland".

The news of the proposed plebiscite roused a storm of anger in Germany. Hitler, declaring that it was an unconstitutional proceeding, demanded the resignation of the Chancellor and the immediate formation of a Nazi Government. German troops were massing on the Austrian frontier, and Schuschnigg yielded. Dr. Seyss-Inquart, the new Chancellor, sent a telegram to Hitler asking for troops to be dispatched to restore order in the country and to prevent bloodshed. This was the Fuehrer's "legal" authority for the invasion of Austria on the night of 11th March. On the same evening Schuschnigg delivered a broadcast message to the nation, explaining the circumstances of his resignation, and declaring "before the world that the reports issued in Austria concerning disorders created by the workers and the shedding of streams of blood, and the allegation that the situation had got out of the control of the Government, were lies from A to Z". Oswald Dutch, who was in Vienna during these days, wrote "that there was never the slightest attempt made at disturbance on the part of the Left, but that on the contrary, besides the Patriotic Front, the entire working-class population was quietly and resolutely behind the Government, standing every provocation, while the National Socialist mercenaries vainly tried to excite clashes and spill blood".<sup>1</sup> To prevent bloodshed Schuschnigg ordered the armed forces of Austria to yield to the invader, and the German troops moved in unhindered.

On 12th March Hitler himself returned to the country of his birth, his mission to restore German-Austria to the great German Motherland fulfilled. A German spokesman commemorated the event in these words: "The vast majority of the Austrians greeted him (the Fuehrer) with bursts of cheers. Under the glow of the spring sun, and with the enthusiastic consent of many millions, Austria became united with the Reich. No force was used, not a single shot was fired."<sup>2</sup> Hitler announced that he would ask the approval of the Austrian people for what had happened, in a "free and secret" plebiscite to be held on 10th April.

In the interval between the *Anschluss* and the plebiscite a pitiless persecution of the enemies of the Nazis was carried out all over the country, and particularly in Vienna. Schuschnigg was made prisoner,

<sup>1</sup> *Germany's Next Aims* (pub. Arnold).

<sup>2</sup> *Germany Speaks*.

along with other prominent members of the Government. Thousands of Jews, Socialists, Monarchists, and others were arrested. Suicide became a common means of escape from the Nazi torment. Some alleged "suicides" conveniently relieved the Nazis of men whom they regarded as enemies fit only to die. Among these were Baron Odo Neustädter-Stürmer, a Heimwehr leader who had commanded the body of troops that overawed the Nazis in Vienna in July, 1934, and Major Emil Fey, who at the same time had negotiated within the Chancellery the surrender of the Nazi rebels. The latter were promised at first a safe conduct to the frontier, but when it was discovered that Dollfuss had been murdered they were held for trial. One of the first acts of the Nazis after the conquest of Austria was to make martyrs of Planetta and Holzweber, the two assassins of Dollfuss who had been convicted and executed, and eleven other Austrian Nazis who had also suffered death for their share in the July rising. This was done despite the condemnation of the rebellion and of the murder of the Chancellor expressed by the German Government at the time.

The Jews in Vienna were the worst sufferers, for there was no escape for them from the official and unofficial persecution of the Nazi conquerors. Driven out of employment and their homes pillaged, they themselves were imprisoned, beaten, and forced to labour at all kinds of humiliating work. Many of them—some 7000 according to Gunther in *Inside Europe*—committed suicide. Jews distinguished in all ranks of life, men with world-wide reputations, like Freud, the psychologist, and Neumann, the doctor, were arrested.

The plebiscite held on 10th April, with the usual Nazi accompaniments of intense propaganda and the menacing appearance of Storm Troopers in the streets, gave Hitler almost 98 per cent of the poll. In the words of the Nazi spokesman: "A burst of joy went through the hearts of the 75,000,000 people reunited in a single realm, which found its political expression in the elections of 10th April. The outside world was surprised. Judgment had not yet been brought into line. The British Government was one of those which criticized the happenings; France took up a similar attitude."<sup>1</sup> The Jews, of whom there were 180,000 in Austria in March, 1938, and other enemies of the régime had been debarred from voting. It has been said that, had Schuschnigg's plebiscite taken place, the Nazis would probably have got 40 per cent of the votes.<sup>2</sup> Hitler was aware of this, and dared not allow it to take place.

<sup>1</sup> *Germany Speaks*.    <sup>2</sup> *Inside Europe*: Gunther.

The German coup came at an unfortunate time for France. Actually she was without a Government, for M. Chautemps, the Prime Minister, resigned on 10th March, the day before Hitler's invasion of Austria, and it was not until the 13th that M. Blum managed to form another Government. Both Britain and France sent notes to the German Government protesting against the brutal method by which the *Anschluss* had been brought about. In reply the Reich, while justifying the invasion as a means adopted to avert "a sanguinary civil war", denied the right of the Western Powers to interfere in a German internal affair. To Mussolini Hitler sent a telegram explaining his action as one of "legitimate national defence", and assuring the Duce that the Brenner was a definite frontier between Germany and Italy, which would never be questioned or touched. Mussolini apparently did not know until the coup was accomplished what his ally intended, but he accepted the *fait accompli*. The Czechoslovak Government, ruler of 3½ million Germans within the frontiers of the state, was naturally alarmed by the annexation of Austria, but the Germans were eager to give assurances that they would not violate Czechoslovakia. Field-Marshal Goering pledged his word of honour to the Czech minister in Berlin that Germany had no hostile intentions at all towards the Czechs, and that it would be the earnest endeavour of the Reich Government to improve German-Czech relations. On the following day Baron von Neurath, speaking in the name of the Fuehrer, asserted that his country considered herself bound by the German-Czechoslovak Arbitration Convention of October, 1925. The Czech Government felt itself, for the time being at least, safe.

M. Blum, the Premier of France, moreover, three days after the invasion of Austria, renewed his country's pledge to the Czech minister in Paris that she would honour her agreement with Czechoslovakia in the event of an attack. On 24th March, Chamberlain delivered a statement in the Commons on Britain's foreign policy. While he did not give a direct guarantee to Czechoslovakia, or bind Britain to help France unconditionally if she was involved in hostilities on account of her alliance with Czechoslovakia, he warned Hitler that "where peace and war are concerned legal obligations are not alone involved, and if war broke out it would be unlikely to be confined to those who have assumed such obligations. It would be quite impossible to say where it might end and what Governments might become involved." He added that "it would be quite within the bounds of probability that other countries besides

those which were parties to the original dispute would almost immediately be involved. This is especially true in the case of two countries like Great Britain and France, with long associations of friendship, with interests closely interwoven, devoted to the same ideals of democratic liberty and determined to uphold them.”<sup>1</sup>

Britain's policy in relation to Austria was both vague and contradictory. Reed in *Disgrace Abounding* pointed out certain inconsistencies. In November, 1937, British official opinion was that “the continued independence and integrity of Austria were an interest of British foreign policy”. Towards the end of the month *The Times*, which abroad is considered a semi-official Press organ, published a leading article suggesting that Austria's destiny lay in union with the Reich.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Lord Halifax paid a visit to Hitler. After this meeting Schuschnigg told Reed that he had learned officially from London that “there had been no change in British policy about Central Europe”, and that Britain “would not permit any change in the *status quo* in these parts”. But when the Austrian Chancellor went to Berchtesgaden in February, 1938, Hitler informed him that the British Government was in full agreement with anything that Germany might do about Austria and Czechoslovakia. Naturally the last statement is of very little value, since Hitler has always lived on an amoral plane of his own where truth and falsehood are of no account. Yet the British Government was not blameless. It seemed to realize that the *Anschluss* between Germany and Austria was inevitable but, instead of facing this situation squarely, it gave the impression both at home and abroad that Britain would interfere in some way if the Reich effected the union by force. All that happened, however, was that the British Government “deplored the methods used”.

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 333, 5th Series, pp. 1045-1046.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 29th November, 1937.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### DISMEMBERMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

CZECHOSLOVAKIA was a composite state, the Czech core consisting of the historic territory of the Bohemian Crown as it finally existed under the Habsburg Monarchy. According to the census of 1930, the population was 14,732,644: of these 9,688,943 (66 per cent) were Czechoslovaks, 3,231,718 (22 per cent) were Germans, 692,121 were Magyars, 549,043 were Ruthenians, 186,474 were Jews, 81,474 were Poles, and the remainder comprised other nationalities. In the Sudeten areas, fringing the purely Czech state, there was a preponderant German population, which, however, had at no time been under the rule of Germany. Before the Great War these Sudeten Germans had lived within the frontiers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the Peace Conference in 1919 Austria put forward a claim for these German districts in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, but geographically they were for the most part separated from the new Austrian Republic, and forming as they did a natural frontier to the Czechoslovak state they remained within it.

The Sudeten Germans themselves had hoped that their territories would become autonomous provinces of Austria, and when this was denied them they adopted at first a passively hostile attitude to the Czech Government. But in a few years a change came. Dr. Kamil Krofta, one of Czechoslovakia's foremost historians, wrote in the 'thirties:

"Abandoning their former negative policy, the Germans in Czechoslovakia gradually adopted one of active participation in the administration of the state, and passed on to friendly co-operation with the Czechoslovaks. The fact that since autumn, 1926, the Germans have been represented by two members of their race in the Czechoslovak Cabinet—and that, too, despite changes in the composition of the Government and parliamentary majority on which the Cabinet has depended—is a proof that the relation of the Germans of Czechoslovakia to their state and to the Czechoslovaks is in process of happy development. This development has been effectively strengthened by the policy of the Hitler régime in

Germany, which has taught the Germans in Czechoslovakia to place full value upon the benefits of the genuinely democratic system of government obtaining in the Republic.”<sup>1</sup>

This view ignored the fact that the Sudeten Germans had definite grievances, although they were treated better than any other minority in Europe. As far back as 1920 an autonomy statute for the minorities in Czechoslovakia had been drawn up, based on proposals of President Masaryk, but the more extreme nationalists among the Czechs prevented its being adopted, and indeed supported attempts to “czechize” the districts where German, Hungarian, and Polish populations lived.<sup>2</sup> But until 1933 the main German parties in Czechoslovakia (Nationalists, Democrats, Pan-Germans, Agrarians, Communists, and so on) made no demand for separation; they were not unwilling to co-operate with the Government, and merely demanded changes within the framework of the state. It was only after Hitler’s rise in Germany that a more hostile and provocative attitude to the Czechs became common in the Sudetenland. Out of the Pan-German group there developed in the autumn of 1933 a new Sudeten German Party, Nazi in sympathy, with Konrad Henlein, a native of Bohemia, as its leader.

Even Henlein in 1933 had no thought of separation from the Czechs. He stated: “The welfare of the Sudetens is indissolubly bound up with the welfare of the Czechoslovak Republic. We stand in principle and unanimously for loyalty to the state. For more than a thousand years Germans and Czechs have lived together in these lands, and always their fate has been common. . . . We feel too vividly the power of historical tradition to consider seriously any kind of territorial revision.”<sup>3</sup> As late as March, 1936, Henlein declared to the British Press that “we prefer neither Hitlerism nor Fascism, but are loyal citizens of the state to which we belong and whose constitution we acknowledge and approve”.

But after the German conquest of Austria in March, 1938, the spirit of the Sudeten Germans changed, and the Czechoslovak Government began to see the clouds gathering as Henlein’s supporters became more and more openly rebellious. The Czechs realized that very considerable concessions would have to be made, and were prepared to make them. On 24th April, 1938, Henlein in a speech at Carlsbad took the offensive by solemnly declaring that the policy

<sup>1</sup> *Short History of Czechoslovakia.*

<sup>2</sup> *Germany’s Next Aims:* Dutch.

<sup>3</sup> *Inside Europe:* Gunther.

of the Sudeten Germans was inspired by the principles and ideas of National Socialism, and that no agreement between the Sudeten group and the Czechs was possible unless the Czech Government revised its foreign policy in terms of "friendship" with the Third Reich. The demands of the Henlein Party were tabulated in a programme of eight points:

- (1) Full equality of status between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechs.
- (2) As a guarantee of equality the recognition of the Sudeten Germans as a legal entity.
- (3) Fixing of the boundaries and recognition of the German areas within the state.
- (4) Full self-government for these German areas.
- (5) Legal protection for every citizen living outside his own national area.
- (6) Removal of all injustices done to the Sudeten Germans since 1918, and reparation for the damages caused thereby.
- (7) Recognition and observance of the principle: "German officials to be employed in German regions".
- (8) Full liberty to Germans to profess their German nationality and German political philosophy.

These demands, extreme as they were, were accepted after some demur by the Czech Government as a basis for discussion. This continued till the autumn, the Czechs conceding more and more, while Henlein, remaining inflexibly hostile, showed no desire at all for a settlement. Actually the negotiations were merely a smoke-screen behind which Hitler was busy (as he indicated in a speech to the Reichstag on 30th January, 1939) making preparations for an attack on Czechoslovakia, to be launched not later than 2nd October. These were of two kinds. In April the controlled Nazi Press started a continuous and violent campaign of abuse and lies against Dr. Benes, President of Czechoslovakia since the retirement of Masaryk in 1935, and against the Czech Government. About the same time military preparations were set on foot; troop movements took place in Bavaria and Saxony, and armed forces were concentrated at strategic spots for a rapid advance into the Sudetenland.

During the week-end of 21st-23rd May—the time of municipal elections in Czechoslovakia—the tension in Central Europe seemed

almost at breaking-point. Rumours were current on 19th May of the movement of German troops in the direction of Czechoslovakia, and on the following day the Czech Government ordered a partial mobilization of the army. Tension was further increased by the death of two Sudeten motor cyclists who, in an attempt to dash across the frontier into Germany, refused to obey the command of Czech guards to stop and were shot. In their possession was a large number of anti-Czech leaflets. The British Government was convinced that an attack on Czechoslovakia was imminent, and on Saturday, 21st May, Sir Nevile Henderson, Britain's ambassador in Berlin, informed von Ribbentrop that if war broke out Britain would give her immediate support to France. War did not break out, and in a day or two Europe again settled into a state of uneasy and suspicious watchfulness. The Reich Government complained that there had never been any possibility of war, and that the May crisis had been engineered solely by the Czech and British Governments. "Certain members of the French Government—notably M. Bonnet—later claimed that the 'threatened invasion' of Czechoslovakia by Germany on 21st May was largely a show put up by the Czechs, for the purpose of testing the British and French reaction."<sup>1</sup> One result of the crisis was that the Germans started to build elaborate fortifications—the Siegfried Line—on the western frontier.

Whether Germany intended to strike in May or not, the partial mobilization ordered by the Czech Government was justified in view of the disorders which the Sudeten leaders continually provoked, and the acts of terrorism they condoned; these, during the excitement of the municipal elections, might easily have led to some sort of *Putsch*. The German Press at this time was filled with accounts of alleged assaults made on defenceless Sudetens. The municipal elections gave the Henlein Party majorities of 70 per cent to 90 per cent in the Sudetenland. Only the most bold and recalcitrant of the Social Democrats and other anti-Henlein Germans were able to withstand the pressure put on them to throw in their lot with the Nazis.

By the end of July the negotiations between Henlein and the Czech Government were at a complete deadlock. Had the problem been one of a purely internal nature it would easily have been solved in the give-and-take of discussion. But Henlein was not now acting alone; every move was made in accordance with the wishes or the actual instructions of Hitler and his advisers. It was then that the

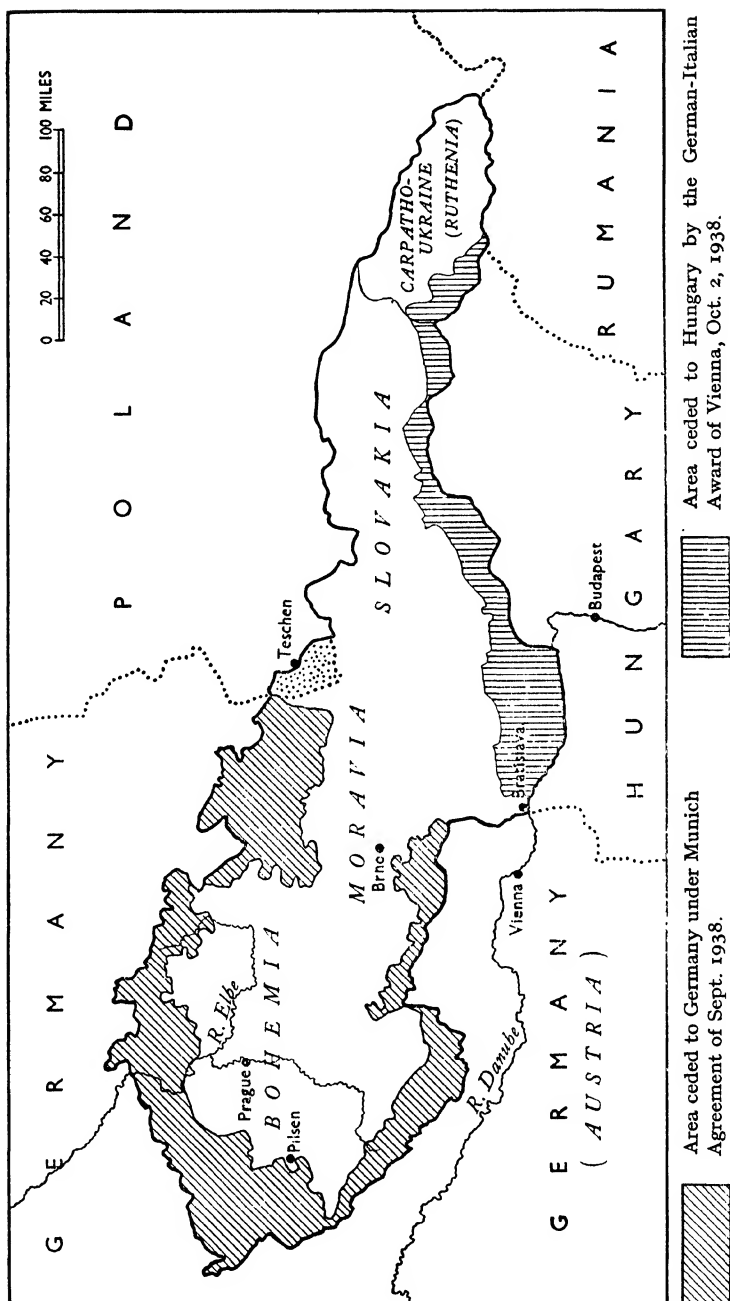
<sup>1</sup> *France and Munich*: Werth.



British Government offered the services of Lord Runciman<sup>1</sup> as an official "investigator and mediator" in the Czech-German dispute. He arrived in Prague on 3rd August, and got into touch with Dr. Hodza, the Czech Premier, and the leaders of the Sudeten Party. But his task was not rendered easier by the unceasing pressure from Berlin on the Czechs. In the middle of August Hitler decided to hold military manœuvres along the Czechoslovak frontier, and 1½ million German soldiers were soon under arms. Henlein continued to turn down proposals that were made to him. The German Press intensified its campaign of hatred, and spread stories of atrocities committed against defenceless Sudeten Germans. Trivial incidents were exaggerated and facts distorted to stir the anger of the Reich readers. For instance, the murder of a member of Henlein's party by a group of German Social Democrats was described as a "new wave of Czech terror", only one responsible German newspaper reporting who the actual offenders were alleged to be.

Despite the difficulties which faced them, the Czechs on 6th September produced far-reaching proposals—what was called the Fourth Plan—embodying almost all the demands of the Carlsbad Programme. On the following day the publication of a leading article in *The Times* suggesting that "it might be worth while for the Czechoslovak Government to consider a solution on some totally different lines, which would make Czechoslovakia a more homogeneous state by the secession of that fringe of alien population who are contiguous to the nation with which they are united by race" appeared at an inopportune moment, for it suggested to readers abroad that this was the British Government's point of view. The Sudeten Germans professed themselves ready to continue negotiations, but the tone of the German Press and of speeches delivered by Field-Marshal Goering and Dr. Goebbels seemed to preclude any possibility of a peaceful settlement. Finally, during the Nazi Party Conference at Nuremberg came a speech by Hitler on 12th September. In angry tones the Fuehrer declared that the oppression of three and a half million Germans, threatened with destruction by the brutality of the Czechs, must come to an end. He made no reference to the negotiations which had taken place, but confined himself to invective, and his jaundiced eye saw in the opposition to his demands a "united front from the Bolsheviks down to the democracies" against

<sup>1</sup> With a long administrative experience both in and outside Parliament Lord Runciman was regarded as specially qualified to undertake this task of mediation. He had retired from the Cabinet in May, 1937, after serving as President of the Board of Trade since 1931.



Germany. The speech provoked widespread riots in the Sudeten territories. Henlein now declared that the Carlsbad Points were no longer sufficient as a basis for discussion, and that "the right of self-determination of the Sudeten Germans" must be considered. As the Czech Government refused at this point to agree to secession, which was what Henlein demanded, war seemed inevitable. It was then that Neville Chamberlain, Britain's Prime Minister, acted. On 15th September he made a historic flight by air to interview Hitler at Berchtesgaden, and to enter into direct negotiations with him.

At Berchtesgaden the Fuehrer explained precisely what he wanted. "The situation," said Chamberlain on his return to England, "was much more acute and much more urgent than I had realized. In courteous but perfectly definite terms Herr Hitler made it plain that he had made up his mind that the Sudeten Germans must have the right of self-determination and of returning if they wished to the Reich. If they could not achieve this by their own efforts, he said, he would assist them to do so, and he declared categorically that rather than wait he would be prepared to risk a world war." The Fuehrer was willing to continue discussions only if Britain accepted the principle of self-determination. Chamberlain expressed his conviction that his visit alone prevented an invasion for which everything was ready.<sup>1</sup>

The British and French Governments examined anew the Czech-German dispute in the light of what Hitler had said, and decided to urge the Czech Government "in the interest of Czechoslovakia and of European peace" to cede to the Reich immediately all districts where more than 50 per cent of the inhabitants were German. The Anglo-French Plan, which the Czechs were forced to accept (on 21st September) by the threat that if they refused France would no longer consider her alliance valid, was not one that the democratic peoples as a whole felt pride in. M. Blum's words, "I cannot feel any joy, and am merely filled with mixed feelings of cowardly relief and shame",<sup>2</sup> echoed the sentiments of many millions in Britain and France. The Czech cup of bitterness was filled to overflowing, for Germany, eager to destroy her enemy completely, encouraged Hungary and Poland to demand the cession of districts in Czechoslovakia in which their nationals had a majority.

On 22nd September Chamberlain paid a second visit to Hitler—this time at Godesberg—confident that peace was now assured since

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 339, 5th Series, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *France and Munich*: Werth.

the Czechs had unconditionally accepted the Anglo-French Plan of dismemberment. An unpleasant surprise greeted the Prime Minister, for Hitler had now raised his terms. The Fuehrer confessed that he had never for one moment expected that Chamberlain would be able to return and announce that the principle of self-determination had been accepted by Britain and France. Now he not only claimed more territory than the Anglo-French Plan conceded and demanded the surrender of the Sudetenland by 1st October, but he also insisted on the holding of plebiscites in areas where there was a preponderant Czech majority. Hitler justified his new demands by confessing that he would seize more if he was forced to undertake a military conquest of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain "bitterly reproached" the Chancellor for his failure to respond in any way to the efforts which the British Government had made to secure peace.

On 25th September the Czech Government refused to accept the terms of the Godesberg Memorandum (it was in the nature of an ultimatum), and it seemed as though nothing could now prevent the outbreak of a European war. France mobilized her army, Britain her fleet, and in both countries air-raid precautions were hastily speeded up. In Britain the inadequacy of the preparations to protect the civilian population against attack from the air became apparent in the last days of the crisis. In an effort to stave off war President Roosevelt of the U.S.A. sent two messages, the first on 26th September to Hitler, Benes, and other statesmen concerned in the dispute, appealing for a peaceful settlement, the second two days later to the German Chancellor alone, emphasizing again the perils of war, and suggesting an international conference in a neutral zone. Neither message evoked any conciliatory word from the Fuehrer; his reply was to order a general mobilization of the German army for Wednesday, 28th September. Even at the eleventh hour Chamberlain's efforts to preserve peace did not weaken. He appealed to Mussolini to intervene, and at the last moment Hitler yielded. The Fuehrer postponed the mobilization of the German troops for twenty-four hours, and proposed a conference at Munich with France, Britain, Italy, and Germany represented. The other powers agreed.

During the weeks of negotiation Russia was ignored by both Britain and France, although she was directly interested in the Czech-German dispute, since she was bound by treaty to aid Czechoslovakia in the event of war if France fulfilled her pledges to her ally. Neither Russia nor Czechoslovakia was invited to attend the Munich Conference. There in the early hours of 30th September

the four powers<sup>1</sup> who claimed the right to settle the destiny of Czechoslovakia concluded an agreement which the Czech representatives, summoned peremptorily to Munich, were forced to accept without question. Virtually at this moment Czechoslovakia ceased to exist as an independent state. Dr. Hodza's Cabinet resigned, as also did President Benes, the object of Hitler's bitterest abuse, and a Government favourable to Germany took office.

The Munich Agreement modified in certain details the Godesberg Memorandum. The occupation of the Sudeten regions by German troops was extended over ten days, instead of taking place as Hitler had originally intended on 1st October. The Fuehrer also agreed that the frontiers of the new Czechoslovak state would be delimited by an international commission instead of by Germany alone. There were other modifications, but actually when the agreement was put into effect Hitler gained even more than he had demanded at Godesberg. On 1st October the German invasion of Czechoslovakia began, and the first zone agreed to at Munich was occupied by the Reich soldiers.

On his return to London Chamberlain was greeted by wildly cheering crowds. "My good friends," he said, "this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time."<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Prague was a city of mourning, writhing in the agony of surrender and humiliation, hundreds of thousands of enemies of the Nazis—Social Democrats and Jews—waiting in fear for the persecution which duly fell upon them, and against which the Munich Agreement had made no provision. Chamberlain also brought back from Munich a no-war pledge signed by himself and Hitler, agreeing that the Munich Pact was, like the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, "symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again". The document went on: "We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other question that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus to contribute to the assurance of peace in Europe."

Besides the territory ceded to Germany Czechoslovakia surrendered in November, 1938, the district of Teschen to Poland, and the

<sup>1</sup> Mussolini may have reflected with some complacency that his Four-Power Pact, apparently still-born in 1933, showed five years later that it was very much alive.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 1st October, 1938.

southern part of Slovakia to Hungary. Altogether one-third of her territory, one-third of her population, and more than half of her entire industry were lost. Britain and France guaranteed<sup>1</sup> the frontiers of the dismembered state, a pledge which the "Czechs did not even condescend to invoke . . . when Germany went on taking away territories for the transfer of which no provision had been made at Munich. They were the first to consider the Anglo-French guarantee as a scrap of paper."<sup>2</sup>

In a debate in the Commons on the Munich Agreement doubts about it were expressed by the opposition leaders, Major Attlee for Labour and Sir Archibald Sinclair for the Liberals. Anthony Eden and other Conservatives were also critical. One member called the agreement "a grave and even desperate humiliation", and Winston Churchill bluntly said: "We have sustained a total, unmitigated defeat." As a corollary to his policy of appeasement Chamberlain uttered these significant words: "For a long period now we have been engaged in this country in a great programme of rearmament which is daily increasing in pace and in volume. Let no one think that because we have signed this agreement between these four powers at Munich we can afford to relax our efforts in regard to that programme at this moment."<sup>3</sup>

In a speech which he delivered in Berlin on 26th September, 1938, the Fuehrer declared that the Sudetenland constituted the last territorial claim which he had to make in Europe. Both at Berchtesgaden and at Godesberg he reiterated this to Chamberlain. In a letter, moreover, which he sent to the Prime Minister on 28th September, 1938, he wrote:

"It is completely incorrect to maintain that Czechoslovakia, in this manner, would be crippled in her national existence or in her political and economic independence. . . . I regret the idea of any attack on Czechoslovak territory. . . . There can therefore be not the slightest question whatsoever of a check to the independence of Czechoslovakia."<sup>4</sup>

As a commentary on the Munich Agreement, in view of what happened in March, 1939, the following statements are worth quoting.

"I claim that what we did was not only essential for world peace, but that it was essential for the Czechoslovak Republic itself. . . . I claim

<sup>1</sup> Britain and France agreed to share in an "international guarantee", which, however, did not come into force.

<sup>2</sup> *France and Munich*: Werth.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 339, 5th Series, pp. 49-50.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *News Chronicle*, 16th March, 1939.

that the course we have taken enables the Czechoslovak Republic to survive." (Sir Samuel Hoare, the Home Secretary, on 3rd October, 1938.)

"It would have been the end of Czechoslovakia. . . . Had it not been for the Prime Minister and the arrangements he made, Czechoslovakia would have ceased to exist." (Lord Stanhope, First Lord of the Admiralty, on 5th October, 1938.)

"What we did was to save her (Czechoslovakia) from annihilation and give her a chance of new life as a new State, which involves the loss of territory and fortifications, but may perhaps enable her to enjoy in the future, and develop, a national existence under a neutrality and security comparable to that which we see in Switzerland to-day." (Neville Chamberlain on 6th October, 1938.)

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### 1939: END OF VERSAILLES

IN 1939 ideological differences divided the nations of Europe into more definite groups than had existed twenty years before. During the Versailles period the spirit of Liberalism withered, with the result that by 1939 Parliamentary democracy survived only in Britain, France, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland. Even Greece, the classic home of individual freedom, fell on 4th August, 1936, under the rule of a dictator, General Metaxas, who justified his coup by proclaiming that, had he not acted, the Communists, having infiltrated into industry, the defence forces, the police, and the *gendarmérie*, would have bathed the country in blood and seized power.<sup>1</sup>

Over Europe at the beginning of 1939 hovered the spirit of Munich (menacingly, in the eyes of some realists), and in the Western democracies the cry of appeasement drowned the whispered fears of those to whom Munich seemed a surrender, which did not round off comfortably the era of Hitler's surprises, but was the curtain-raiser to a new drama with the old motifs of broken faith, aggression, and persecution. Although on 30th January Hitler spoke confidently of a long period of peace, Europe continued to rearm feverishly, having little faith in the predictions that slipped so glibly from the lips of the Fuehrer. A British White Paper, issued on 15th February, estimated the expenditure on defence for the year 1939-40 at 580 million pounds.

The interest of Britain's Foreign Minister, Lord Halifax, was not centred solely in Europe. He had to keep a watchful eye on the Sino-Japanese conflict, for Japan, now in occupation of large tracts of Chinese territory, showed no disposition to continue the Open Door in China, or indeed to observe any other of the international agreements which regulated the relations of foreign powers with

<sup>1</sup> In August, 1936, there was no Communist revolution imminent in Greece (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 27th May, 1938.)



each other in the Far East. In view of Japan's discrimination against her trade in China, Britain addressed a stiff note to Tokio on 14th January, emphasizing that she stood by the Nine-Power Treaty, and that she would not accept any unilateral modification of its terms.

In June relations between Japan and Britain grew worse after the refusal of the authorities in the British concession at Tientsin to hand over to the Japanese four Chinese alleged to have murdered in April a customs superintendent of the Japanese-controlled administration. The British concession was blockaded, and British residents were subjected to gross indignities. The British Foreign Office realized that the matter of the Chinese suspects was merely a pretext seized upon by Japan to challenge Britain's position in the East. A conference was arranged in Tokio to consider Anglo-Japanese relations, and on 22nd July Britain admitted that, in view of "the actual situation" in China, the Japanese authorities had the right "to suppress or remove any such acts or causes as will obstruct them or benefit the enemy". But the conference made little headway, and broke down completely when Britain refused to discuss the problems of Chinese silver and Chinese currency on a purely Anglo-Japanese basis, since these issues affected other powers. On 26th July, the U.S.A., angry at the insulting treatment which her nationals in China suffered at the hands of the Japanese military authorities, gave six months' notice of her resolve to end the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation signed with Japan in 1911.

Early in 1939 the anxieties of the British Government were increased not only by what was happening abroad but also by difficulties at home. An attempt in January to blow up an electric pylon at Didsbury was the first of a series of bomb outrages in England. These were the work of agents of the Irish Republican Army, who hoped by a campaign of terrorism to force the British Government to surrender its authority over Northern Ireland. At the end of July, when the number of terrorist acts had risen to 57 in London and 70 in the provinces (sentences totalling 604 years had been passed on the perpetrators who had been arrested), the police got special emergency powers, including the right to deport Irish citizens suspected of being connected actively with the Irish Republican campaign.

At the beginning of March, 1939, the international situation seemed fairly easy, without any major crisis near at hand. On the 10th of the month Stalin, in a speech with which he opened the Soviet Communist Congress, accused the Western Powers of having bought off Germany with the sacrifice of Austria and the Sudetenland.

He tabulated lucidly the principles underlying the U.S.S.R.'s attitude to other states:

"The foreign policy of the Soviet Union is clear and understandable. First, we stand for peace and the strengthening of businesslike relations with all countries, and we will adhere to these relations as long as countries maintain identical relations with the Soviet.

"Secondly, we stand for close, peaceful, and neighbourly relations with all countries which have a common frontier with the U.S.S.R. Thirdly, we stand for rendering support to nations which have fallen prey to aggression and are fighting for their independence. Fourthly, we are not afraid of the threats from aggressors, and we are ready to retaliate with two blows for one against the instigators of war who attempt to infringe the integrity of the Soviet borders."<sup>1</sup>

Five days later, on 15th March, came a blow that apparently caught the Western Powers entirely unawares. Without any provocation German troops crossed the Czech frontier from the Sudetenland, which they had occupied in October, 1938, and annexed the Czech territories of Bohemia and Moravia. Then, forty-eight hours after recognizing the independence of Slovakia, Hitler took it under his protection, and his troops marched in. Virtually it became part of the Third Reich along with the dismembered state of the Czechs. Ruthenia, left in the air by Hitler's coup, was overrun by Hungarian troops. The guarantee of the Czech frontiers promised in the Munich Pact had always been rather vague. Actually it had not been put in force, and Britain was under no legal obligation to intervene in March. Germany seized her booty,<sup>2</sup> and, while Europe looked on in angry bewilderment, Hitler, summoning the Lithuanian Foreign Minister to Berlin, ordered him under threat of an invasion to restore Memel. The Lithuanians obeyed and withdrew from this territory, which was occupied by Germans on 22nd March.

There was no doubt about the general reaction in Europe and throughout the world to the March coup. Chamberlain expressed his "bitter regret" at what had happened, and added: "I cannot regard the manner and method by which the changes have been brought about as being in accord with the spirit of the Munich Agreement." In the U.S.A. the feeling that the disintegration started at Munich was reaching a culminating point was expressed. "Czechoslovakia," said the *Washington Post*, "is Germany's first colony in

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 17th March, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> "I refuse to win for ourselves the members of other nations who will never love us," said Hitler in 1933, "at the cost of the blood and lives of those who are dear to us."

Central Europe." In France the Munich policy of appeasement was killed instantly, and to Daladier, the Prime Minister, the Chamber granted without question wide dictatorial powers to pass any measures "suitable to maintaining or increasing the forces of France". The attempt to come to a peaceful understanding with Hitler having failed (Chamberlain confessed in a speech at Birmingham on 17th March that his hope of appeasement was "wantonly shattered"), the British Government, making a radical change in policy, proceeded to build up in conjunction with France a Peace Front against further aggression. After the annexation of Czechoslovakia, Poland's position was the most critical, and the British Cabinet on 31st March gave a guarantee of assistance to Poland if she was attacked. France offered a similar guarantee. Negotiations were also opened with other powers whose independence seemed threatened by Germany's ambition.

The need for rapid action if aggression was to be stopped became apparent on 7th April (Good Friday), when Italy invaded Albania.<sup>1</sup> Troops landed at three points on the coast, supported by ships and aeroplanes, and, beating down the slight resistance offered them, overran the country. King Zog of Albania fled with his queen to Greece. Mussolini had the support of Hitler, his Axis partner, in this act of aggression, for German troops manned the Yugoslav frontier in case that country made any move. Virtually Italy had exercised a protectorate over Albania for years, but her occupation of the country now enabled her to threaten directly both Yugoslavia and Greece, and by her control of the Adriatic to challenge more confidently the power of Britain and France in the Mediterranean. Count Ciano, Italy's Foreign Minister, who spoke in justification of Mussolini's coup, made the curious assertion that King Zog had asked for Italian troops to be used against Yugoslavia. Claiming that Italy's action did not violate the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, he denied the British assertion that the Anglo-Italian Pact of 1938 had been broken.

In April Britain extended her guarantee of assistance to Greece and Rumania if their independence was threatened, the French

<sup>1</sup> Dictators are proverbially fickle. The day of Christ's Crucifixion was apparently less sacred to Mussolini than that of His birth, for in a speech to Parliament in January, 1925, replying to attacks which had been made upon him, he said:

"Can you really think that I could order—on the day following the anniversary of Christ's birth, when all saintly spirits are hovering here—can you think that I could order an assault at ten o'clock in the morning in Via Francesco Crispi, in Rome, after the most conciliatory speech that I ever made during my government?" *Autobiography*: Mussolini (translated by Child.)

Government making a similar declaration. A further step in the building of a Peace Front, announced by Chamberlain on 12th May, was the signing of an Anglo-Turkish Agreement, which, pending the completion of a definite treaty,<sup>1</sup> pledged the signatories to co-operate effectively and to lend to each other all the aid and assistance in their power in the event of an act of aggression leading to war in the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup> The reply of the Axis Powers, Germany and Italy, to this was to conclude on 22nd May a military alliance to hold good for at least ten years.

By this time the British Cabinet had entered into discussions with the Government of the U.S.S.R., since it was realized that the Soviet's adherence to the Peace Front would immeasurably increase its strength. Throughout the summer the Anglo-French negotiations with the Soviet, said at one moment to be making good progress, at another to have broken down completely, and then again to be on the point of completion, pursued a tortuous and halting course. Britain and France were willing to concede much to Russia, but the Soviet refused to sign an agreement which promised help only to Poland and Rumania. She wished to enlarge the scope of the Peace Front to include the Baltic states, although these states did not themselves want any guarantee of protection. It was said also that neither Poland nor Rumania was willing to allow Russia's soldiers to cross her frontiers, and that this was another obstacle to the conclusion of a general pact.

Towards the end of April Britain approved of another revolutionary change in her traditional peace policy, namely the introduction of compulsory military service. In view of the far-reaching commitments which had now been undertaken, the Government felt that a voluntary army would be inadequate, a fear which had been often uttered in the French Press in 1938-39. The measure of conscription which Britain adopted at first was moderate: young men between the ages of 20 and 21 had to serve six months in one of the branches of the defence forces. On 15th July the first batch of 30,000 of these militiamen was called to the colours.

From the end of March onwards the centres of interest in

<sup>1</sup> An Anglo-Franco-Turkish Treaty of Mutual Assistance was signed on 19th October, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Turkey behaved as a "good European" in the 'thirties. Wishing to regain greater control over the Dardanelles than the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) allowed, she did not indulge in any unilateral action, but appealed to the interested powers for a revision of the treaty. In July, 1936, a new Dardanelles Convention was signed at Montreux. This agreement restored to Turkey the right to fortify the Straits.

European affairs were Poland and Danzig. Tension between Germany and Poland became acute, particularly after Britain and France started to build up a Peace Front, a measure which Hitler described as an attempt to encircle the Reich. The Nazis, who, with a two-thirds majority in the Diet, had controlled the administration of Danzig since 5th May, 1937, made no disguise of their determination to incorporate the Free City into the Third Reich. Illegal military preparations on a large scale were carried out in Danzig, and provocative acts against Polish officials became frequent. In a speech which he delivered in the Reichstag at the end of April, Hitler, after denouncing the Ten-Year Non-Aggression Pact which had been concluded between Poland and Germany in January, 1934, made known the terms upon which he was prepared to sign a new agreement with the Poles. He claimed the return of Danzig and the cession to Germany of a route through the Polish Corridor to connect West and East Prussia, with a railway line and extra-territorial status. In return Germany was prepared to recognize Polish economic rights in Danzig, to ensure Poland a free harbour there, and to accept as permanent the existing boundaries of the two countries. He offered the Poles a Twenty-Five Year Non-Aggression Pact, and agreed, finally, to join with Hungary and Poland in a guarantee of an independent Slovak state.<sup>1</sup> For the first time in an important speech Hitler made no reference to the U.S.S.R. He denounced the Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 1935 on the grounds that, although he had striven for peace and friendship with Britain, it was now plain that both official and unofficial British circles took it for granted that a war with Germany was inevitable.

In the same speech the Fuehrer poured scorn on an appeal for peace which President Roosevelt of the U.S.A. had addressed to Hitler and Mussolini on 15th April. The President had asked for an assurance from the dictators that during the next ten years they would not attack twenty-nine European powers which he named. He proposed, if a favourable reply was received, to convene a world conference to discuss disarmament and other political questions which it might be desirable to deal with, and to take measures to free international trade from restrictions. Hitler insisted that he had no evil designs on the states mentioned by the President, adding that he had addressed an inquiry to these states, asking them if they felt themselves threatened, and that the replies he had received were in all cases negative.

<sup>1</sup> These terms were unacceptable to the Poles.

In the summer the German Press started a campaign of abuse against Poland, reminiscent of that directed in the previous autumn against Czechoslovakia, accusing the Poles of merciless persecution<sup>1</sup> of the Germans in their territory. This "war of nerves" was intended apparently to intimidate the Poles, and by provoking crisis after crisis—it seemed as though some sort of outburst would occur at any moment in Danzig—so weaken the morale of Germany's enemies that they would willingly yield to her demands. In July Herr Foerster, the Nazi leader in Danzig, uttered a provocative speech, in which he asserted that the people of Danzig were determined to return to the Reich. In the middle of August the same speaker assured a meeting of his supporters that the hour of liberation was near at hand.

On the home front Britain made ready during the summer for any emergency that might occur. Gas-masks were issued to all the civilian population, intensive A.R.P. work was carried on, including the training of volunteers for all kinds of service, and black-out tests were made in parts of the country. In July Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that Supplementary Defence Estimates had had to be prepared, and that the expenditure for the armed forces for the year would be 730 million pounds, 150 million more than he had anticipated three months earlier.

At the end of July a political agreement had not yet been reached with Russia, but the British and French Governments agreed to send military, naval, and air missions to engage in staff talks in Moscow. Chamberlain told the House of Commons that, in the view of M. Molotov,<sup>2</sup> the Soviet Prime Minister and Foreign Commissar, the staff talks would be speedily followed by a political pact. But Stalin had other views. On 21st August came an announcement from Berlin that Germany and the Soviet Union had agreed to conclude a pact of non-aggression, and four days later the pact was signed. For years Hitler and Stalin had inveighed against each other, and now the principles upon which both leaders had built their reputation and their power were cast aside for political expediency with a cynicism

<sup>1</sup> In a communication to the British Government dated 29th August the German Chancellor accused the Poles of "numerous encroachments in the Free City of Danzig". "To this," he continued, "were added barbaric actions of maltreatment which cry to Heaven, and other kinds of persecution of the large German national group in Poland, which extended even to the killing of many resident Germans or to their forcible removal under the most cruel conditions." This was part of what Lord Halifax called "an indefensible and misleading presentation of the German case". (Blue Book, Cmd. 6106, 1939.)

<sup>2</sup> Molotov replaced Litvinov as Foreign Commissar on 3rd May, 1939.

that amazed and disgusted the world. The Non-Aggression Pact was virtually an alliance, which, as was proved later, aimed at the partition of Poland. It became clear that the negotiations between Germany and the U.S.S.R. had been going on for months at the time when the Soviet was pretending to welcome an agreement with the democracies. One explanation of Russia's failure to join the Peace Front was given by Marshal Voroshilov, Soviet Defence Minister, who blamed Poland, since she had refused to allow in any circumstances Soviet troops to cross her territory in order to reach Germany.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of August, with the threat of war in the air, Britain and France did all they could to persuade the German Chancellor to settle the German-Polish question in a conference. Neutrals threw their weight on the side of peace: President Roosevelt addressed a message to Hitler and to M. Moscicki, President of Poland; both Leopold III, King of the Belgians, and Pope Pius XII<sup>2</sup> broadcast appeals for peace. But Hitler was adamant. He was determined that German pride could be satisfied only by a military conquest, and he had two million of his soldiers already in position on the frontiers of Poland.

On 28th August the British Government urged Hitler to enter into direct discussions with the Polish Government, a proposal which Hitler said on 29th August that he was prepared to accept, "though sceptical as to the prospects of a successful outcome".<sup>3</sup> He insisted, however, that matters were urgent and that a Polish emissary with full powers must arrive in Berlin on the following day. In the early hours of 30th August Sir Neville Henderson, Britain's ambassador in Germany, was instructed by Lord Halifax to inform the German Government that "it is, of course, unreasonable to expect that we can produce a Polish representative in Berlin to-day, and the German Government must not expect this". At midnight on 30th-31st August, Sir Neville Henderson in an interview with von Ribbentrop, Germany's Foreign Minister, suggested that he should adopt normal diplomatic procedure, and that, when the German proposals were ready, these should be handed to the Polish

<sup>1</sup> Italy and Japan, Germany's partners in the Anti-Comintern Pact, found it difficult to condone Germany's *volte-face*.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Pius XI, enemy of the doctrine of racialism and the new paganism in Central Europe, died on 10th February, 1939. Cardinal Pacelli, Papal Secretary of State since 1930, was elected his successor on 2nd March, and assumed the title of Pius XII.

<sup>3</sup> The diplomatic exchanges preceding the outbreak of war are recorded in a Blue Book, Cmd. 6106, 1939.

Ambassador, M. Lipski, for transmission to his Government. In reply von Ribbentrop read at top-speed a lengthy document containing sixteen points which Germany proposed as a settlement. He refused to give to the British Ambassador a copy of these proposals, saying it was too late, as the Polish representative had not arrived in Berlin by midnight on the 30th. On 31st August, M. Lipski, on instructions from his Government, took steps to get into touch with the German Foreign Office, but he was not received by von Ribbentrop until 6.30 in the evening. After this interview the German Government broadcast 'its proposals for a settlement of the Polish question, together with a statement that it regarded these as having been rejected. M. Lipski then tried to make contact with Warsaw, but failed to do so, because all means of communication between Germany and Poland had been closed by the German Government.

Any further diplomatic negotiation was useless, for at 5.30 on the morning of 1st September German troops invaded Poland. On the evening of the same day Sir Nevile Henderson handed to von Ribbentrop a note from the British Government intimating that, unless the German Government gave satisfactory assurances that it had suspended all aggressive action against Poland and was prepared promptly to withdraw its forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would without hesitation fulfil its obligations to Poland. No reply to this communication was made, and at 9 a.m. on 3rd September the British Ambassador handed to the German Foreign Minister a second note to the same effect, with the addition, however, that if satisfactory assurances were not forthcoming by 11 a.m. a state of war would exist between the two countries as from that hour. No such assurances being given, a state of war existed between Great Britain and Germany as from 11 a.m. on 3rd September. France presented a similar ultimatum to the German Government at 12.30 p.m. on the same day. It expired at 5 p.m., and from that hour she also was at war with Germany.

In a broadcast addressed to the German people on 4th September the Prime Minister explained Britain's reason for entering into war with Germany in these words:

" You may ask why Great Britain is concerned. We are concerned because we gave our word of honour to defend Poland against aggression. Why did we feel it necessary to pledge ourselves to defend this Eastern Power when our interests lie in the



West, and when your Leader has said he has no interest to the West? The answer is—and I regret to have to say it—that nobody in this country any longer places any trust in your Leader's word.

“He gave his word that he would respect the Locarno Treaty; he broke it. He gave his word that he neither wished nor intended to annex Austria; he broke it. He declared that he would not incorporate the Czechs in the Reich; he did so. He gave his word after Munich that he had no further territorial demands in Europe; he broke it. He gave his word that he wanted no Polish provinces; he broke it. He has sworn to you for years that he was the mortal enemy of Bolshevism; he is now its ally.

“Can you wonder his word is, for us, not worth the paper it is written on? . . .

“In this war we are not fighting against you, the German people, for whom we have no bitter feeling, but against a tyrannous and forsworn régime which has betrayed not only its own people but the whole of Western civilization and all that you and we hold dear.

“May God defend the right!”

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